

A HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT





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A HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT



Mr. Thomas Conolly.
by Sir J. Reynolds.

A HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

By the Earl of Mayo K·P

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

IT is probable that the traditions of hunting stretch further back into the past in Ireland than in any other of the three kingdoms. It would be difficult, I think, to find an earlier record of sport than the legend which preserves the fact that in the first century of our era the hero Fraech received from his aunt a present of seven hounds which chased "seven stags, seven foxes, seven hares, seven boars and seven otters in the presence of Ailill and Medb, King and Queen of Connaught, who watched them hunting till midday." I know of no earlier mention of the fox as a beast of chase, and that exploit of the legendary hero may be claimed by Irishmen with some confidence as the first record of a sport which has since become national.

It is at a date not much later, as history is reckoned, that the tradition of sport in Ireland is placed firmly on an historical basis by a no less authoritative personage than a Roman consul. Quintus

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Aurelius Symmachus, writing in 391 A.D. to his brother Flavianus, then presumably in Britain, thanks him for his gift of seven Irish hounds, which he describes as “novel contributions to our solemn shows and games” and “calculated to win the favour of the Roman people for our Quaestor.” The Romans, it appears, were much impressed by the size of the Irish hounds, which they employed in the amphitheatre to fight men, wild beasts, and other dogs.

The fame of the Irish hound continued without any diminution from those days until times quite modern. The Irish hound was a gift highly valued by the princes of all nations and the subject of tribute between chieftains; the right of dealing in Irish hounds, indeed, whether as giver or receiver, seems to have been confined to men of royal birth. Sixteen chieftains so qualified are mentioned by name in the Book of Rights and Customs, the number of hounds composing the gift or tribute being specified in each case, seven hounds being the usual number, and they are described in three instances as “very beautiful, all white, eager and quick eyed.”

The status of the chase in Ireland in those early times is perhaps best indicated by the fact that the prime chieftain or right-hand man of the king was usually Master of the King's hounds. Finn, son of

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Cumall, for example, who flourished according to Celtic authorities in the third or fourth century A.D., filled that office for King Cormac, and the poems of the Finn cycle are full of the doings of that hero, his men, his hounds, and their prowess in the field. Three hundred of his hounds, indeed, are mentioned by name, and it is easy to form a definite idea from the poems of the methods of hunting employed by the sportsmen of those days.

Finn seems to have hunted in the neighbourhood of Howth, Ben Edair, and his pack included three hundred full-grown hounds, and two hundred puppies. A thievish Briton in his service stole three of his best hounds, "Bran," "Sceolaing" and "Admall," and fled with them to England, "but the dogs were recovered after a hard-fought battle in Britain," says the historian. Finn's hunting took the form of a drive of deer and wild boar. "He set on foot the hunt at Ben Edair, and took his station between Edair's height and the sea, while his men slipped their greyhounds. There his spirit was gay within him, while he listened to the maddened stags' bellowing as by the greyhounds of the Fraim they were rapidly killed."

The earlier records of Ireland, indeed, leave us in no doubt as to the importance of the part played by the chase in the life of those primitive times. The admiration of the Irish for sport is indicated

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by the fact that the word *cu*, hound, or *mil chu*, the hound used for large game, was often a part of the title of chieftain or warrior. "St. Patrick's master was Milchu; his convert, who gave him Down, was Di Chu, and the prefix of *cu* was common among the leaders of the Irish during the early centuries of the Christian era." As for the love of the Irishman for his hound, did not Oisín say to St. Patrick, "To the son of Cumall, and the chiefs of the Fiann, it is sweeter to hear the voice of hounds than to seek mercy. O, son of Calpurn, wilt thou allow to go to heaven my own dog and greyhound," an interesting anticipation of the idea expressed in Pope's well-known lines:

" And thinks, admitted to the equal sky,
His faithful hound will bear him company."

Coming to historical times, we find the Irish reputation for sport in no way diminished. "The Irish," wrote Bartholomaeus Anglicus about 1260, "are contented with milk for drink, and are more addicted to games and hunting than to labour." King John and Edward the First have both left record in the Calendar of State papers of their appreciation of the valuable qualities of the Irish hound. In Tudor times, the hunting establishments of the great were a continual grievance with their opponents. Thus, in 1525 the Earl of Kildare

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charged the Earl of Ormonde " that he exacted coyne and livery throughout Tipperary and Kilkenny for his sundry hunts, that is to say, twenty-four persons with sixty greyhounds for deer hunting, another number of men and dogs for to hunt the hare, and a third number to hunt the marten."

Only a few years later, the Earl of Kildare himself was the object of a similar complaint. The grand juries of Kildare, Kilkenny, and Waterford presented respectively, " that the Earl of Kildare's Hounds and huntsmen must have meat through the counties of Kildare and Carlow as often as he doth appoint, to the number of forty or threescore, and when he used to have a hunt every day, to have both bread and butter, like a man; which is a more prerogative than any Christian prince claimeth." The Earl of Ormonde does not escape the censure of the grand juries. " Divers persons being servants of the Earl of Ormonde, being called the Hunt," says the presentment, " do use to come to the Mansion house of any inhabitant in the county at all times at their pleasure with their greyhounds and other dogs of the said Earl, and do take meat and drink for the said dogs." Again, " the Poers formerly, and now Lady Catherine Poer, have fourteen persons keeping her hounds, who, besides their own meat, will have bread and milk for every hound; her hounds and dogs are kept at the charges

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of the county." The same story is told against other of the nobles by the jury of Dingawan and by the jury of Tipperary. It would seem indeed that one of the privileges of being a keeper or huntsman of the great nobles' hounds was a warrant "to take by way of cesse sufficient meat and drink for themselves and their said hounds of every the freeholder inhabitants of the said country, so that they remain but one day and night with any inhabitant or tenant."

With hunting thus established so firmly in Ireland it is not surprising to find the Irish hound famous throughout Europe. Henry the Eighth instructed his Lord Deputy of the Council to make a grant of four hounds yearly to a Spanish nobleman, the Marquess of Desarrya, or his son, the longest liver; two Irish hounds were included in a gift forwarded to Queen Elizabeth by Shan O'Neill in 1562; and in 1600 Dr Peter Lombard, primate of Armagh, declared that in Ireland "are bred the fairest and best hunting dogs in all Europe; water dogs that pursue waterfowl; others that hunt hares, rabbits and foxes; and others much larger and most powerful in capturing stags, boars, and wolves." It is interesting to find a record of sport in Ireland which brings us nearly to the eighteenth century. Alderman J. Howell of Cork wrote in 1698, "Wolves indeed we have, and foxes, but these are

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rather game and diversion than noxious or hateful," from which it would seem that by that year fox-hunting had ceased to be merely a means of killing vermin, and had already been established in Ireland as a sport for its own sake.*

Here then is a tradition of Irish sport which brings us up to a date before which little is known of fox-hunting in England or elsewhere, and it may be of interest to glance very briefly at the circumstances in which the sport developed, and in which it became established as a part of the national life in both countries.

There seems little doubt that fox-hunting as distinguished from the chase of the deer and the hare is relatively a very modern sport; certainly there is little reliable information about any pack of foxhounds either in Great Britain or Ireland with a history of more than two centuries. It is probable that the sport was evolved on both sides of St George's Channel on similar lines, from small hunting establishments kept by private individuals in various parts of both countries. All the early writers on hunting, from Twici, onwards, have little to say of the fox, and that little points to the very poor opinion in which he was held by

*I am indebted for these facts in the history of sport in Ireland to the Rev. Edmund Hogan's admirable *History of the Irish Wolf-dog*. Dublin, 1897.—MAYO.

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sportsmen. The fox indeed was esteemed as vermin, a marauder to be smoked out of his den, killed and exterminated if possible, by the easiest means at hand. Such hounds as were employed were used in tracking him from one earth to another, from which, if he could not be bolted, he was dug or burned out. So late as 1611, Gervase Markham rates the fox with the badger, and classes both as "chaces of a great deal less use or cunning than any other," and at the end of the same century Richard Blane in the *Gentleman's Recreation* regards the chase of the fox "as not so full of diversity as that of the hare." It is improbable that foxes were hunted on horseback until the beginning of the eighteenth century either in England or Ireland. Parish records in England prove that in many parts of the country a price was put on his head, and rewards given for masks and brushes, which were nailed to the church door. In any case, the notable sportsmen of Anne and the first Georges hunted either stag or hare. Somerville in the *Chace* places hare-hunting before fox-hunting, and Sir Robert Walpole was a hare hunter who kept a pack of beagles in Richmond Park, and hunted on Saturdays, which is still a reason for the House of Commons not sitting in ordinary circumstances on that day.

There seems indeed every reason to believe that

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the merits of the fox as a beast of chase were first discovered by the smaller country squires and yeomen who until the end of the seventeenth century had been accustomed to hunt the hare, stag-hunting then and earlier having been the exclusive sport of the greater gentry. It was the smaller men, as I say, who first discovered the superior merits of the fox; their discovery was later shared by the stag-hunters, and before a century had passed all classes of sportsmen, aristocrats, gentle and simple, were brought together in the enjoyment of the sport which we now know as a national institution.

Many gentlemen have claimed for their families the credit of establishing the first pack of foxhounds in England. The tenth Lord Arundel of Wardour contended that a pack which an ancestor of his hunted in Hants and Wilts between 1690 and 1700 was the first pack of foxhounds ever seen in England. These hounds were eventually sold to Mr Hugo Meynell, the founder of the Quorn, and the accepted father of the sport in England. A similar claim is made by the Boothby family for their ancestor, Mr Thomas Boothby, who certainly hunted a pack from Tooley Park near Leicester. His horn with the inscription "With this horn he hunted the first pack of foxhounds then in England fifty-five years" is still in existence.

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Mr Boothby died in 1752, and it is said that he gave his parish church a peal of bells "so tuned as to resemble the cry of a pack of hounds." The Charlton Hunt, later the Goodwood, hunted foxes at about the same date, and the Brocklesby Hunt was recognized as a pack of fox hounds in a document of 1713.

But these and such other packs of hounds as existed in the early part of the eighteenth century were the appanage of the smaller country gentlemen and yeomen; they were mostly trencher fed, and assembled at a meet from the various homesteads at which they were maintained, singly or in couples. The term "whipper in" still in vogue was first applied to the official who went round to collect the hounds on hunting days. It is probable that foxhounds were still the exception during the first half of the eighteenth century at least, and that the majority of packs were as yet harriers. It is certain that many of the old school kept to the hare. I have quoted Somerville in this sense, and it is known that the original Vine hounds kept by Mr Chute, Horace Walpole's friend in Hampshire, did not give up the hare for the fox until 1791.

Meanwhile in England, and probably in Ireland, the great families among the aristocracy hunted the deer. At great houses like Belvoir, Badminton

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and Berkeley Castle, packs of staghounds had long been a part of the establishment. These hounds were known as buckhounds, but they were not always restricted to the chase of the deer, though that was their chief business. Individual owners, however, had long used them at times for the pursuit of hare, fox, even wild cat and marten; anything indeed which would show sport. The hounds were heirlooms, and were bred carefully for generations. But as time went on each owner bred certain hounds for his particular fancy of hare, deer, etc., and thus at the opening of the eighteenth century there were many varieties of buckhound existing in England; probably in Ireland also, though here there is a lack of any evidence. This specialization of the hound in England has a particular interest for the Kildare Hunt, because, as I shall show, hounds which ran in Kildare at a very early period owed much of their blood to drafts from one of the great family packs in England.

At the time I am considering, there were at least three distinct types of hound existing in England, all of which must be regarded as ancestors of the modern hound. These were the buckhound of which I have written above, the southern hound, and the fox beagle, which originated in the northern counties. Of these the buckhound was

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most like the modern foxhound, but heavier and slower. The southern hound, now extinct, was more like the bloodhound; he had a good nose, long ears and a deep, bell-like note, and was used for both hare and deer, but was too fast for one and too slow for the other. The fox or northern beagle resembled a small modern foxhound, and had long been used in the bolting and smoking operations which were the orthodox way of dealing with the fox in the northern counties. He possessed great dash, and the foot beagle of the present day owes his many good qualities to this strain. It is from crosses of the buckhound with the fox beagle, with some slight admixture of the blood of the southern hound and perhaps a dash of that of another beagle, the blue mottled beagle, that the modern foxhound has been evolved.

This evolution of the modern hound was doubtless very gradual. The owners of the great packs of buckhounds had learned the virtues of fox-hunting from the smaller gentry, who one after another were converting their trencher-fed harriers into packs of foxhounds. At Badminton the tradition of the conversion is still alive, and the date of the discovery of the virtues of the fox as a beast of chase is fixed definitely in the year 1762. In the winter of that year the fifth Duke of Beaufort was passing with his hounds through Silk Wood when a fox

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jumped up in front of the pack, faced the open country and gave such a run that the young duke thenceforth gave up stag and converted his pack into foxhounds. But the modern hound of course did not arrive as the result of a single crossing. The conditions of fox-hunting in its early days indeed did not require him, the runs were probably longer, but certainly much slower than in modern times. Foxes were fewer, woodlands more extensive, and game and poultry scarcer. The fox in consequence had further to travel for a meal, and knew intimately a greater extent of country than his descendant to-day. He was a stout goer and gave longer runs than in these days when in many counties there are too many foxes, degenerate from too much food too easily obtained.

On the other hand there were many conditions which told against great pace. The meet and throw-off always took place before sunrise, as early indeed as it was possible to distinguish gate from stile. This was necessary because the only way of finding a fox was by following his "drag," that is the trail he left on returning from his night's feed, which disappeared after sunrise. Consequently old hunting records often begin with the remark, "We breakfasted at midnight," and at Willey Hall, Squire Forester's place in Shropshire, it was usual for the guests to arrive the day before the

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meet, sit down booted and spurred at four o'clock in the afternoon, and remain in their chairs until it was time to go to the meet. Hounds were still slow, the conditioning of horses was not well understood, and hunters generally were much distressed by heavy coats until the opening of the nineteenth century, when clipping first came into general vogue. Often only three trusted hounds, corresponding to the tufters used in staghunting, were sent into the covert, and hounds were handled in much the same fashion as staghounds in Devon and Somerset to-day. There was no difficulty in getting the fox to break, as there were no foot-people, and small fields at meets were the rule.

The slow pace, however, made hard riding unnecessary, and indeed impossible. Men rode to see hounds work rather than to enjoy a gallop. Riding straight was considered no virtue, knowledge of a country was at a premium, and the horsemen best posted in that knowledge were accustomed to see most of the fun by making points.

It can never be a matter of certainty when the change from these older methods took place, but it is safe to assign the middle of the eighteenth century as the approximated date, and to accept Mr Hugo Meynell as the prophet of the modern school. It was that gentleman who succeeded Mr Boothby in Leicestershire, and who founded

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modern fox-hunting when he bought Quorndon from Lord Ferrers and founded the Quorn pack in the year 1753. By crossing the existing types of hound with the northern beagle, he obtained a breed of foxhound which improved the style of hunting, and introduced a dash which it had never known before. His ideal of breeding was much that of the present day and his style of hunting was summed up in a sentence by some sportsman who said, "Whereas many had walked down foxes, Meynell was the first who galloped them to death." It was indeed only after Mr Meynell's improvement of the foxhound and methods of hunting that hard riding became possible, and it was during his time that the hard rider appeared. Of these Mr Cecil Forester was one of the first to attain eminence, though his conduct in the field gained little sympathy from Mr Meynell, who once said, "First out of covert comes Cecil Forester, then the fox, and lastly my hounds."

Though perhaps not quite relevant to my subject, I may in passing from the development of fox-hunting in England mention that the building of the first bridge across the Thames at Westminster was directly due to the love of the Duke of Grafton for the sport. His grace kept a pack of hounds at Croydon, in addition to that in his own country at Grafton. He was so bored by having to

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cross the ferry each time he went to Croydon to the meet that he promoted a Bill which resulted in the building of old Westminster Bridge. It was this duke who appeared at the meets in a single-breasted peach-coloured frock coat reaching nearly to his heels, and wore a three-cornered hat trimmed with gold lace. When foxes were scarce at Croydon he would bring down one in a hamper which had been trapped in Whittlebury Forest. The duke always maintained that if such a fox escaped, it returned again to Whittlebury. He was a great martinet in the field, and was impatient of the slightest noise when hounds were drawing. On one occasion an old gentleman who was much troubled with a cough was waiting with the rest for the fox to break. The duke walked his horse up to him, took off his gold-laced hat with a profound bow and remarked in a voice of suppressed passion, "Sir, I wish to God your cold was better."

Such is a very brief glance at the origin of fox-hunting in England, and there is every reason to believe that it developed on exactly similar lines in Ireland. The first fox-hunting here was practised by different packs maintained by individual gentlemen, each of which would have a considerable following among the sportsmen of its own neighbourhood. Of these private owners the names of several have been preserved, doubtless those of many others

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have not survived. The claim to priority is still a matter of difference of opinion, never likely to be settled. It is claimed by some enthusiasts that the Ormonde and King's County packs can be traced to private establishments of foxhounds running in the latter part of the seventeenth century, a claim which may or may not be well founded. It seems certain, however, that a Mr Lowther kept hounds in Meath in 1740, and that a Mr Henry Wilson of Ballgiblin was showing sport with the Duhallows as early as 1745. Colonel Pigot of Glevoy was another of the pioneers of the sport, who had a pack of his own well back in the eighteenth century. The Kilkenny pack probably owes its origin to Mr, afterwards Sir John, Power, who at first lived on the patrimonial estate at Tullamaine Castle, though the hounds were kennelled at Kilfane, near Thomastown, or at Kilkenny. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century the pack was bought *en bloc* from a Yorkshire gentleman named Wharton, so was probably of pure English blood. It was recruited later with drafts from Colonel Thornton's hounds, which included the celebrated Modish, a descendant of whose, Harbinger, is regarded as the founder of the existing Kilkenny pack. Other packs which date from the eighteenth century, and doubtless owe their origin to similar private effort, are the Limerick, the

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Ormonde, and the Queen's County packs, and, lastly, members of the Kildare Hunt will have a special interest in two private packs maintained by Mr Thomas Conolly at Castletown and by Mr Wm. B. Ponsonby at Bishops court respectively, to which organized hunting in Kildare undoubtedly owes its origin, and a consideration of the history of which will make a suitable opening for a new chapter.



MR. THOMAS CONOLLY.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST PACKS OF THE KILDARE COUNTRY

I AM confirmed in my opinion that organized fox-hunting in Ireland, as in England, was first made possible only by the maintenance by individual gentlemen of private hunting establishments, by evidence, scanty in all cases, but still conclusive, of the existence of three such establishments all close to each other in the district hunted by the Kildare hounds to-day. It is quite beyond doubt that well back in the eighteenth century packs of foxhounds were kept at Castletown by the Conollys, at Bishopscourt by the Ponsonbys, and at Johnstown by the Kennedys.

Tradition has long assigned the origin of the present Kildare pack to the first mentioned of these families, then represented by Mr Thomas Conolly of Castletown, the famous Squire Conolly whose memory is still alive in Kildare as the type and pattern of the Irish gentleman and sportsman. Sport generally in Kildare and fox-hunting in particular

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undoubtedly owe much to that gentleman. But after an inquiry as full and exhaustive as I could make it in existing circumstances, I am unable, for reasons which will appear, to support tradition to the extent of accepting the Castletown pack of those early days as the fount and origin of the present Kildare Hunt. But it is certain that indirectly at least, the success which fox-hunting has enjoyed in the Kildare district for more than a century owes much to Squire Conolly, and any inquiry into the origin of the sport in Kildare must take full account of any evidence which exists of the establishment which he maintained on a large scale at Castletown during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

By the kindness of Captain E. M. Conolly, the present owner of Castletown, descendant of Squire Conolly, who has placed many interesting private papers at my disposal, I think I shall be able to give some important particulars of the development of hounds and hunting in Kildare, and a glance at least at one of the most notable of the private hunting establishments which in Ireland as elsewhere made the modern sport, as we know it, possible.

Squire Conolly married Lady Louisa Lennox, daughter of the second Duke of Richmond in 1758, and at the date of the first letter bearing on the subject of our inquiry had succeeded to his paternal

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estates at Castletown, and was living there the life of the typical sporting Irish gentleman of those days. He obviously had a pack of foxhounds in 1764, for on October 17 of that year a Mr E. Calcraft wrote to him from Ancaster on the subject of sport, and as the letter contains an interesting allusion to the Duke of Rutland's hounds, the forerunners of the famous Belvoir pack, with which Mr Conolly's own pack, I think, was at that time closely allied, I set it out at length.

Ancaster,
17th Octr. 1764.

My dear Conolly,

I have the pleasure to tell you we are at last got a little settled in our habitation at Ancaster, and fox-hunting begins on Saturday next. The Duke of Rutland was afraid we should kill too many foxes if we started sooner. The hounds have been to be blooded in Nottinghamshire at Lord George Sutton's. I have contented myself with humble hare-hunting to get my horses in condition for the fox dogs.

I flattered myself with the hopes of hearing from you after the Curragh, and to have received a good account of the performances of Apollo, but as I have heard nothing, I shall not ask questions, lest I should receive mortifying answers; therefore shall turn to my old friend Mr Soarby and your

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hounds. I hope they have had plenty of game, and you good sport. . . .

I have news to send you from this retired place. Lord Granby has come to-night to Willsford, and has desired me to meet him with Mr Pennant's harehounds on our heath. We go with the fox dogs to Ropsy Rise on Saturday, so I am impatient from it.

Believe me, your affectionate and sincere friend,

E. CALCRAFT.

It will be noted that this letter establishes the fact that Mr Conolly had a well-established pack of foxhounds in Kildare as early as 1764. It is interesting to note, too, the famous soldier the Marquess of Granby, whose features still survive on many old inn signs in English villages, at his diversion with the harriers at Ancaster in the same year; and the mention of harriers and of "fox dogs" by Mr Calcraft seems to confirm the theory of the gradual evolution of fox-hunting from the chase of the hare of which I have written in the previous chapter.

A letter of Mr Wm Sherlock, written from Sherlockstown on March 20, 1777, and mainly concerned with a projected meeting of the Jockey Club, "occasioned by Several Rules of the Jockey Club having been broke through," contains a concluding paragraph relating to hunting in Kildare which I may quote.

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“ Have you given up Fox-hunting for this season? Will you hunt this country; you know there are foxes, if you do not think it late? ” In the same year I find letters from Mr Thomas Thoroton written from Belvoir Castle, which establishes, I think, a blood relationship between the Belvoir pack and Mr Conolly’s hounds in 1777. In a letter from Belvoir dated June 7, he urged Mr Conolly to send his huntsman over to bring back hounds from the Belvoir pack, it being already late in the year for some of them to travel. A fortnight later another letter, which I may set out at length, will show the generous infusion of English blood which reached the Castletown pack in that year.

Belvoir Castle,
June 22nd, 1777.

My dear Sir,

I have sent you eleven couple of hounds that I hope will please you. There is two dogs, the one a Grey and white dog called “ Gayger ” (Gauger) that is of our best sort and I most strongly recommend him as a stallion. The other dog called “ Farewell ” with a Red Head and a large Black spot on His Loins I equally recommend as a Stallion. He is of Mr Pelham’s* sort.

* Probably Henry Pelham, the statesman, son of the first Lord Pelham. He married Lady Catherine Manners, daughter of the first Duke of Rutland.

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As the Setting up of any pack depends upon Bitches in my opinion more than Stallions, I have sent you four Bitches from whom we have bred excellent hounds, and also six young Bitches that I dare say will breed you as good.

The white Bitch called "Mopsey" is own Sister and of the same Litter with Monarch, a Hound of the Highest Reputation in this part of the World and has been as a Stallion this year to Pelham, last year to Meynell. I would not have parted from "Mopsey" to anybody but you.

"Columbine," "Banquet" and "Ransome" are all capital brood Bitches, and a large white Bitch with a Grizzle spot on her Loins I am sure from her breed will be a Capital Bitch. I will send their pedigree to you, but at present it would exceed the Limits of this Letter.

I have taken the Liberty of sending a couple of small Bitches for Lady Louisa, and with my best Respects, I beg her acceptance of them. They are called "Isabell" and "Lady"; "Isabell" is enter'd and a very good one; "Lady" is only a whelp. Little as They are, They will run up with your Hounds and they will breed Large Hounds, being Dwarf Hounds of a Large sort.

The Duke of Rutland presents his best comps; permitt me to add the best Respects of

Dear Sir,

Your very faithfull and Obedient Servant.

THO. THOROTON.



LADY LOUISA CONOLLY.

THE FIRST PACKS

I find this Mr Thoroton was a person of some note in his day. He was a country gentleman with a small property at Screveton but was well known in political life as the agent of the 3rd and 4th Dukes of Rutland. He sat for some years for the Duke's pocket boroughs of Boroughbridge and Newark; later for Bramber, as the nominee of the Marquess of Granby, who while Master of the Ordnance made Thoroton Secretary to the Board. He had a large share in the English affairs of the 4th Duke, whom he also assisted in Ireland during his term as Lord Lieutenant in 1784-7. Thoroton's conduct during the Gordon Riots in 1780, when he was instrumental in saving many lives from the mob, attracted much favourable notice.

The Belvoir pack from which Mr Conolly's hounds at Castletown were thus recruited was one of the most famous in England, and was perhaps already approaching its highest point of excellence. The Belvoir hounds were the result of crossing the old family buckhounds which had been maintained at Haddon and Belvoir by successive members of the Manners family for many generations, with other blood, and the typical Belvoir hound was probably already a fixed type. This hound, with a black saddle and tan patches upon the purest white ground, was eventually of so uniform a colouring, that at first the eye had a difficulty in distinguishing

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one hound from another. The third Duke of Rutland, who succeeded in 1721 and was still alive in 1777, was a great foxhunter. It was he who brought the pack from Haddon, and it was under his direction that hounds were bred for fox-hunting and that the Belvoir pack took to the fox. He died in 1779, and under the fourth duke the fortunes of the hunt somewhat declined. But during the minority of his successor the pack was managed by Sir Carnaby Haggerston and Lord George Cavendish. Later Mr Perceval, brother of the Prime Minister, was associated with the management, and in his hands the pack was brought to a perfection which it has since maintained.

Mr Conolly's well-known patronage of the Turf is reflected in several letters of this period. It is evident that the Curragh was already a great racing centre in Ireland, and there are numerous allusions to trials and matches there during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In June, 1777, Lord Farnham wrote congratulating Mr Conolly on the success of a horse called Friar, and in concluding a letter which has many references to horse breeding and racing he adds the following interesting paragraph:

“ I will send for two or three cast staunch fox-hounds to attack the martens; they have increased

THE FIRST PACKS

so that I cannot have a pheasant or any other sort of game in my woods. If you can spare them, I wish you would write soon that I may lose no time in sending for them. Adieu, I have company just come."

In this same year, 1777, one gets most valuable information as to the Castletown pack in a letter written by Lord Clifden, Mr James Agar, then recently created Baron, who was later raised to the viscounty. It is written from Gowran, and, as will be seen, makes mention of another of those private hunting establishments which were the nurses of modern fox-hunting.

Gowran,

17th July, 1777.

My dear Sir,

When I last saw the Duke of Leinster, he told me you were very low in hounds, and that many of your whelps had died, and that you meant to buy a parcel in England. Now as I would wish to keep what money we have in the country, as far as in me lies, if you will accept them I can give you ten or twelve couple of good running hounds as possibly you can get anywhere. They are of a middling size, but fleet and high mettled. Almost all my whelps have failed this season also, or you should have them. There is so little game in this country, and I am so seldom down here of late during the hunting

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

season, that it is not worth my while to keep them, and I know you will keep them up well, and deserve to be helped, as you assisted me when I was low.

Let me know by a line when I shall send my huntsman per Wattletown with them.

I beg my best compliments to Lady Louisa, as does Lady Clifden to you and her.

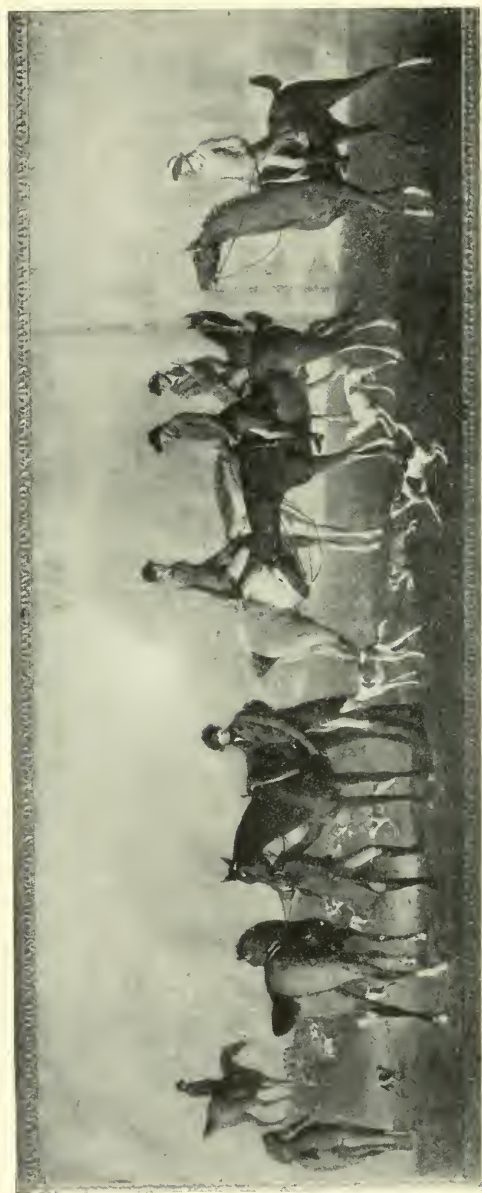
I am, my dear Sir, with great regard and esteem,
Your most obedient and affectionate humble
servant,
CLIFDEN.

We are reminded of an acute family quarrel by a letter from Simon Luttrell, Lord Irnham, afterwards the Earl of Carhampton, whose demesne at Luttrellstown Mr Conolly had perhaps drawn without leave. This intrusion seems to have taken place at an inconvenient time, as the feud between his lordship and his brother, General H. L. Luttrell, arising out of a claim by the latter on the family estates was then perhaps at its height.

Luttrellstown,
Thursday, 6th June, 1780.

My dear Sir,

Your apology is very sufficient for unhinging my park gates. Their being so closely shut up was owing to the Terror my Wife and Family live in from a Lawless Banditti armed with Clubbs Blud-



MR. THOMAS CONOLLY AND CASTLETOWN HOUNDS.

THE FIRST PACKS

geons etc. and headed by Col. Luttrell* with his Sabre which at present surround this place.

I was just on my departure for England, but obliged to postpone it till I can put Lady Irnham under a proper protection in my absence.

I am glad to hear you have had such good sport and any day you please to give notice to Lady Irnham of yr. intention to take a Day's Hunting here, the Gates shall be open, but I trust to yr. Managemt. not to spoil the Demesne.

I remain, My Dear Sir,
Your very Old Friend and most Devoted
Servt.,

IRNHAM.

From other letters preserved at Castletown I find there was a pack of hounds running at or near Castlemartin in 1780, for Lord Shannon, writing to Mr Conolly in December of that year on another subject, adds a postscript:

“N.B.—I was drench'd in a Drain foxhunting this morn, and have left the Foxhunters to say as much.”

Finally, Baron Dillon, writing in 1783 from Lismullen, co. Meath, on the 2nd February has this,

*The famous Colonel Luttrell, the candidate of the Court against John Wilkes in the Middlesex election of 1769.

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

“ If your business would permit you to give me the pleasure of your company about this day se’n-night, we might have the whole week following without interruption. The gentlemen in my neighbourhood are anxious to see you and enjoy the fox-chase in its perfection, but I hope you will make your visit here at your own time, as I shall always be happy to see you and your friends.”

From this I infer that Lismullen was one of the places to which Mr Conolly periodically took his hounds, following a custom which was universal in those days, by which the owners of packs exchanged a week’s hunting in a strange country with each other.

With Mr Conolly’s death near the end of the eighteenth century passed one of the last and the most prominent of the Irish sporting gentlemen of the pre-Union days. Although we are more interested in him as one of the pioneers of fox-hunting in the Kildare country, he was a very notable sportsman in other directions. I find in the *Sporting Magazine* for 1792 the following, dated Dublin, March 7, 1792:

“ The Rt. Honable Mr Conolly makes a present of a Gold Cup value 200 gs. to be run for at the next Spring Meeting at the Curragh. The terms of the cup are that it shall always be liable to Chal-

THE FIRST PACKS

lenge on the deposit of 50 gs as a private bet by the owner of any horse that may be entered upon the same race."

Many legends centre about Mr Conolly and Castletown. The best known is one called "The Devil and Tom Conolly," which preserves the tradition of the open-handed hospitality which undoubtedly prevailed at Castletown during the Squire's lifetime, when, indeed, anyone riding with the hounds was expected to finish the day with him. This legend is embalmed in a very long set of verses which appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* for 1843. They are written in the then popular style of the *Ingoldsby Legends*, and the following extracts give the important part of the story.

The covert is reached and a better array
Of sportsmen it never has seen than to-day;

'Tis as gallant a field

As all Ireland could yield.

The horsemen to all kinds of devilment steeled;
But the best-mounted man at that gay covert side
Is honest Tom Conolly, Castletown's pride;
All mirth and good fellowship beam in his eye
Such a goodly collection of guests to descry.

For guests shall be all

In Tom Conolly's hall

Who keeps open house for the great and the small,

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

And none who takes share in the fox hunt to-day
'Ere midnight from Castletown's mansion shall
stray.

“ Hold hard, don't ride over the hounds! ” What
a scramble,
Away go the hounds in the wake of the fox,
Away go the horsemen through brushwood and
bramble,
Away go they all o'er brooks, fences and rocks;
While the musical cry of the fleet-footed hound
Is ringing in chorus melodiously round
And the horseman who rides at the tail of the pack
Is a very tall gentleman dressed all in black.

Onward still, 'tis a spanking run
As e'er was seen by morning's sun;

Onward still

O'er plain and hill,

Gad! 'tis a pace the devil to kill

And now the boreen

With that rascally screen

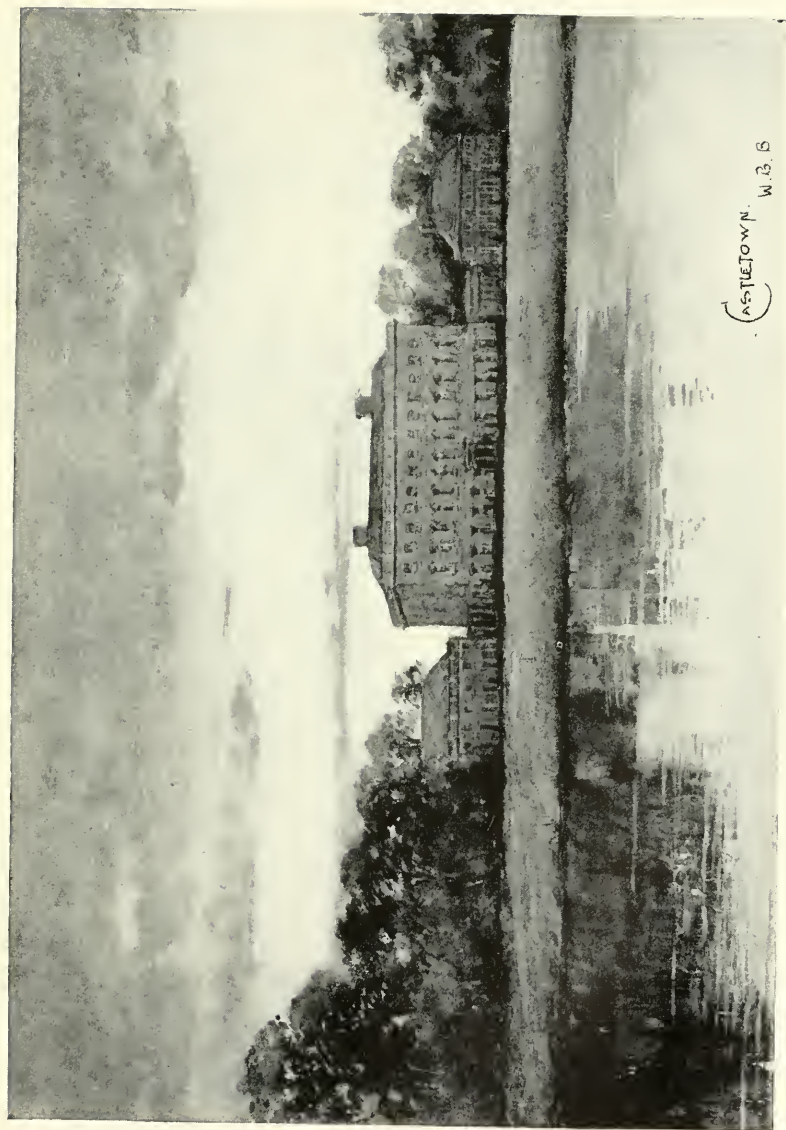
Of furze on each bank. “ By Nim, that's a poser!

There's the black fellow at it, Gad! over he goes,
Sir,

Well done, Conolly! stick to the nigger, you dog,
Though he seems old Beelzebub riding incog.”

Ha, Reynard, you're done for, my boy, at your back
Old Jowler and Clinker come leading the pack;
That squeeze in the gullet has finished your
breath,”

And that very black horseman is in at the death.



CASTLETOWN. W.B. 15

CASTLETOWN.

THE FIRST PACKS

That very black horseman dismounts from his
steed

And takes off Reynard's brush with most sports-
manlike heed.

The group has come up with the stranger the
while

Who takes off his hat to the squire with a smile,
And hands him the brush with an air most polite

Expressing his joy at transferring the right
Which only the speed of his hunter had won

To him who had shown them so noble a run.

“ Gad, Sir! ” says the Squire,

“ Whether most to admire

Your politeness or daring I'm puzzled to say,

But though I've seen hunting enough in my day

All I've met with must yield

To your feats in the field;

I trust I at least can induce you to dine

And your horsemanship pledge in a bumper of
wine.”

Then with laughter and jest

Honest Tom and his guest

Ride along while their humour is shared by the rest

Who vow one and all

Master Nick to install

As the prince of good fellows and just at nightfall

They reach most goodhumouredly Castletown
Hall.

But enough, to their dinner the hunting folk sit
With a silence displaying more wisdom than wit;

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

But as for the stranger, his feats in the field
To his feats at the table unspeakably yield;
In drinking, in laughing, in frolic and jest
He seems but the sun who gives light to the rest.
 But at length they have done
 And drop off one by one
From their chairs, overcome by the claret and fun;
 At a quarter to four
 All lie stretched on the floor
Enjoying in chorus a mighty fine snore,
While still to the claret like gay fellows stick
The warm-hearted squire and his jolly friend Nick.

There's a cooper of wine by Tom Conolly's chair,
And he stoops for a bottle—At what does he stare?

 “ Can it be? Oh, no doubt
 My fine lad, you're found out,
There's a cloven foot plainly as eye can behold
 Cut your stick,
 Master Nick,
 If I may make so bold
 'Pon my life what a jest
 To have you for my guest
You toping by dozens Lafitte's very best.
Be off, Sir, you've drunk of my wine to satiety.”
“ No, thank you,” says Nick, “ Tom, I like your
 society.”

Tom rings for the flunkies, they enter—What now?
He looks at old Nick with a very dark brow

THE FIRST PACKS

And says while the latter complacently bears
His glance, "Kick that insolent rascal down-
stairs."

Nick cries, "My good friends, you had better be
civil,

'Tis not pleasant believe me to deal with the devil;
I'm that much-abused person, so do keep aloof
And, lest you should doubt me, pray look at my
hoof."

Then lifting his leg with an air most polite
He places the cloven hoof full in their sight

When at once with a roar

They all rush to the door,

And stumbling o'er wine cooper, sleepers and
chairs

Never stop till they've got to the foot of the stairs.

The parson is sent for, he comes, 'tis no go,

Nick plainly defies him to send him below.

Asks "How is your mother," and treats him indeed
With impertinence nothing on earth could exceed.

Father Malachy sure that for Nick he's a match,
Doesn't ask better sport than to come to the
scratch.

Then th' exorcism begins

But old Nick only grins

And asks him to read out the table of sins,

"For between you and me

Holy Father," says he,

"That's light and agreeable reading, you see."

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

At an insult so dire,
Father Malachy's ire
Was aroused in an instant, so closing the book
He gives the arch rascal one desperate look,
Then with blessed precision the volume lets fly
And hits the arch enemy full in the eye.
There's a terrible yell
That might startle all hell,
A flash and a very strong brimstony smell
And save for a cleft
From his exit so deft,
Not a trace of the gentleman's visit is left.

"We still show the place where the devil's supposed to have disappeared through the hearthstone," Captain E. N. Conolly writes to me.

I may take leave of Mr Thomas Conolly by quoting a short recollection of that gentleman written by a sportsman who called himself "Remembrancer" in the *Sporting Magazine* for 1832.

"Mr Conolly of Castletown, one of the greatest patrons and promoters of sporting that Ireland ever saw. The Irish Turf owes some of its best sources to the constant importations which this princely gentleman continued through his life from the best studs in England. Whether Mr Conolly used the Irish or Cork foxhound or procured a pack from England, I have not been able to learn, though I incline to the latter opinion."

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The letters I have already considered and quoted prove, I think, that " Remembrancer " was amply justified in that opinion.

There was obviously a tradition of sport of old standing at Bishops court. Sir Anthony Weldon of Kilmarony, Athy, has very kindly lent me a pocket-book belonging to his great great grandfather, in which is a brief note recording the meeting there of a band of congenial spirits in 1747, of which Mr Walter Weldon made one, at the age of twenty-three. This I regard as a rendezvous of foxhunters and as evidence of the probability, at least, that a hunt was running at Bishops court in that year. Here is the note:

" The Jolly sett that mett at Coll. Ponsonby's at Bishops Court on ye 20th Day of Aprill 1747.

" Col. Ponsonby. Benjn. Burton. Sr. Ralph Gore. Willm. Forteskew. Richd. Ponsonby. Robt. Johslin. Robt. Rochfort. Robt. Percival. Henry Sandfort. Robt. Sandfort. John Lomeroy. Steran Tigh. Richd. Gore. Captn. Hy. Carter. Edward Dane. Walter Weldon."

A letter written by Walter Weldon's father, Arthur Weldon of Ralin, dated Feb. 18, 1726, to his wife from Bishops court is also of interest.

Bishops court,
Feb. ye 18th, 1726.

I believe my Dearest Life will be surpriz'd and I

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

fear be angry when I tell yo' yt I went to bed last night at one of ye clock, was on horseback this morning at four, rid eight miles before day break, hunted a fox afterwards, came back afterwards here to dinner and rid a coursing this afternoon till nightfall, and I thank God I cannot say I am much the worse for it. . . .

My Ld. and Lady give my mother and yo' their services. I am inclined to be sleepy so must bid yo' good night with assuring yo' I am,

My Jewel, your own for ever,

A. WELDON.

The pages of that same invaluable storehouse of information upon sport of all kinds, the old *Sporting Magazine*, enable me to give some interesting particulars of the second of the great private packs which I have mentioned as existing during the eighteenth century in the present Kildare district. It will be clear from some quotations I shall make that there was an elaborately organized hunting establishment at Bishops court in the year 1792, and that the pack kept by the Right Honourable W. B. Ponsonby, later Postmaster-General of Ireland, was no new institution at that date. It was a fortunate chance for the purposes of our inquiry into the beginnings of fox-hunting in Kildare which led "An Irish Baronet" to write some of his recollec-

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tions of sport in Ireland of more than half a century earlier to the editor of the magazine in 1845.

I do not think there will be much difficulty in identifying the gentleman who wrote above that name, and that when he tells us that his grandfather, the reigning baronet, "æt. 93," had pocket boroughs at Annabelle in the Golden Valley, another pocket borough elsewhere, that his son was member for Bannagher in 1792, one son-in-law for Wicklow and a second for Galway town, the family of Sir Joseph Hoare is very plainly indicated. The writer of the article of 1845, Sir Joseph Wallis Hoare, who by that time had succeeded as third Baronet, was at the date of the meeting he describes a youth acting as amanuensis to his grandfather the old baronet.

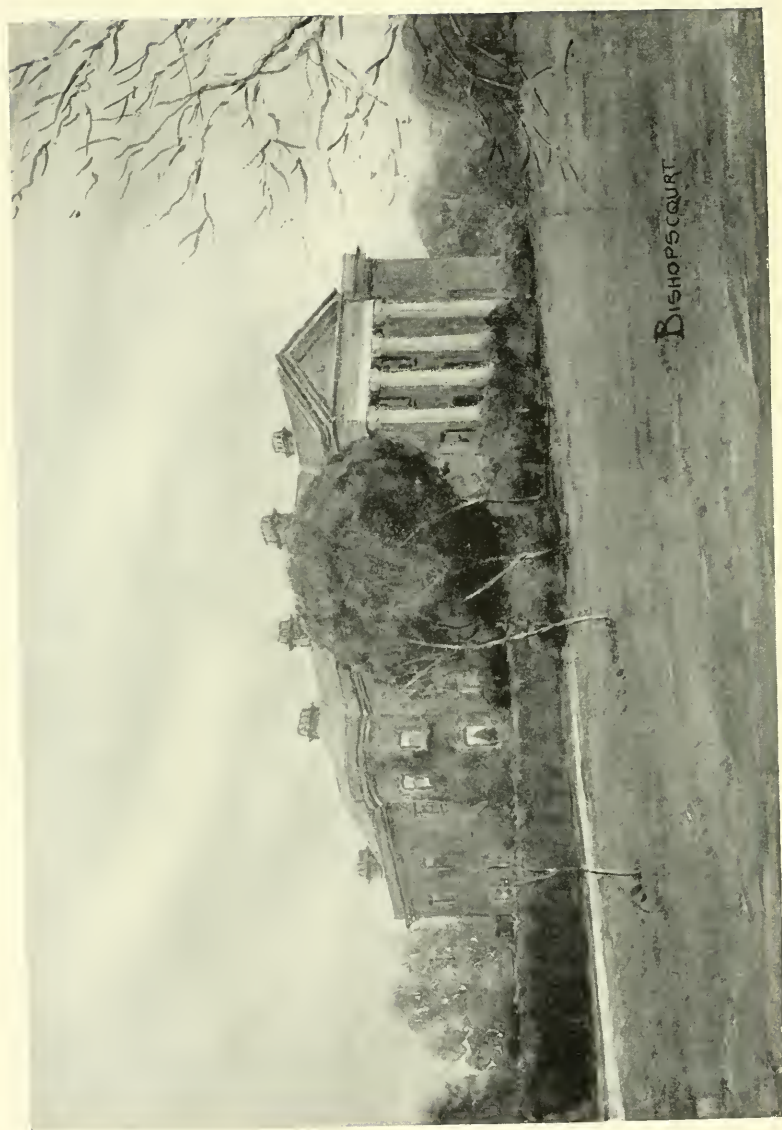
It is interesting to find that this meeting, though ostensibly called for the sole purpose of enjoying the sport which followed the custom of one pack visiting the country of another, was in reality a political meeting of the first importance. It was a conference between country gentlemen to consider what the writer describes as "'plots' between the E. of W(estmorland), Lord Lieutenant, and his facetious secretary, Major H(arcourt), by which the country would be grievously compromised," and it was summoned by a letter written by Mr W. Brabazon Ponsonby from Bishops court to the old

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baronet saying that in consequence of the supposed plots, on such a day, " My dear Joe, all our friends have agreed to hold a conference at Willy Burton's of Burton Hall, co. Carlow, the most central point for all hands, and as it will be about the time of our annual hunting meet at the Hall, the hounds and horses will start from Bishopscourt in a few days, so *nil rescribere attamen ipse veni.*"

The old baronet's party from Annabelle included himself, the parliamentary son and sons-in-law, the writer of the article to the *Sporting Magazine*, and his cousin, " W. H. H.," but present members of the Kildare Hunt will be perhaps more interested in the personalities of the sportsmen who went over from Bishopscourt and its neighbourhood, and these the " Irish Baronet " shall himself describe.

" We met at the hall ready to receive us," he writes, " Willy Burton, M.P. for the county, his eldest son Ben Burton, one of the crack members of the Bishopscourt Hunt, and afterwards well known in Yorkshire and Warwickshire, where he settled; the Rt. Hon. W. B. Ponsonby, Master of Hounds, and his brother the Hon. G. Ponsonby, acting manager; the Rt. Hon. Dennis Bowes Daly, *par excellence*, the most sporting man in Ireland and M.P. for the King's County, Lord Cole, M.P. for Inniskillen; Jack St Leger, M.P., John Curran, M.P. for



BISHOPSCOURT.

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Tullogh, all members of the Bishopsclough Hunt, formed the party at Burton Hall.

“The country seats of Spanish Brown of Browns Hill, Sir Richard Burton of Garryowen, and Gustavus Rochfort, M.P., whose place and extensive woods and fox coverts were the delight of every sportsman on the banks of the Suir, all which and the two inns at Carlow combined to lodge the aristocratic members of the Bishopsclough Hunt, to which were added the leading and influential Whigs on the four hunting days and flocking from the surrounding counties of Kildare, Wicklow, Kilkenny, and last, though not least, sweet County Tip.”

The baronet goes on to record his youthful impressions of this meeting, impressions which are of great interest as a picture of fox-hunting in Ireland nearly a hundred and twenty years since.

“Although the turnout of the Bishopsclough Hunt itself in the four days about which I am thus irregularly jotting down my recollections was not from the sombre uniform of its members as flashing and as striking to some eyes who like to dwell on some hundred to hundred and fifty cavaliers decked in scarlet and gold, yet to my eye, which was caught more by the aristocratic Master himself than the coat he had on, the splendid and numerous pack of well-bred, well-matched English dogs, the blue coat and velvet cape lined with buff, the broad

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striped blue and buff waistcoat, yellow buckskins, in fact the dress of the Fox Club, with a large yellow button in which was embossed a fox's pate, around which in large legible characters 'Bishopscourt Hunt' appeared quite as aristocratic as anyone need wish.

"Although the right honourable owner of these hounds," continues the Irish Baronet, "seemed to take as much satisfaction and delight in the way he was surrounded, yet nothing I could plainly distinguish was at all to be compared to the marked joy, mingled with love and respect which you saw in every member's countenance when riding up to greet their admitted leader in both the house and the field for *omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci* was translated thus by his brother George, 'The sure way of getting your Irish friends and supporters, particularly those who cling to fox-hunting and live in distant counties, to be punctual in their attendance on parliamentary duties, is to keep a rattling pack of Foxhounds at Bishopscourt near the capital,' in which translation, every one who knew the man also knew this was 'one word for the M.P.'s and two for himself.'"

The baronet then gives us a portrait of Mr W. B. Ponsonby, the Master.

"Who of all the men I ever met in my younger days possessed more of the keen sportsman in his composition and understood *par excellence* as much of the hunting of a pack of foxhounds and crossing

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a country as he did, of quoting Coke upon Lyttleton or of expounding the principles of the British Constitution to an united parliament, a knowledge he gave on every occasion most convincing proofs of, previous to ending both his parliamentary and hunting career when he became Chancellor of Ireland.*

“Of the truth of my first observation no one could be ten minutes in doubt after seeing him in the field. To use his own favourite expression, he had the paid huntsman of the Bishops court Hounds ‘under his thumb.’ He laid down certain rules and laws for drawing coverts and hunting a country, and to deviate and wander from these was as much as the huntsman’s place was worth to him. This man had many admirers both in the field and in the House of Commons.

“As to the sport itself during the four days, had it not been for the precautionary measures taken by old Willy Burton, who previous to the arrival of the hounds from Bishops court had taken special care to send over to Hume Wood to the earthstoppers on Lord Fitzwilliam’s estates to bag him eight to ten strong foxes, one of which was regularly unbagged in every covert previous to the hounds throwing off, and thus at least a find became a matter of certainty. As this stratagem was not known to anyone but the *major domo*, the thing did no harm. The foxes however were the great sufferers, as out of

* A mistake. Mr W. B. Ponsonby was Postmaster-General. His brother, Mr. G. Ponsonby, was Chancellor.

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

ten only two escaped slaughter, and those gave splendid runs of some five and thirty minutes each right on end into their own country. The last day was the most severe, when the Hon. George, Ben Burton, my cousin and I, shaking off a field of a hundred and twenty-five, with the huntsman and one whipper in, were the only six fairly in at the end of the chase, and many a valuable steed got his quietus at that race. When you come to the bog and the passes, the being pressed or thrown out is no very difficult matter. W. H. H., himself hunting a splendid pack of Kerry Beagles *naturellement* knew every foot of the ground we ran over, and made us up to our work.

“ At the period I am scribbling about, the founder of the present feast at Burton Hall was then beginning to train off, but his delight was to see every one partaking of the sports of the field into which he seldom entered except a ride to go and see the hounds throw off. On the present occasion he would skulk back to the hall laughing in his sleeve to tell his blood relative the old baronet the hoax he had run upon the Honourable George about the bag foxes, as he knew it would be nuts and apples to him, and very soon the affair got wind and came to Dennis Bowes Daly's ears, who loved in his heart to get a rise out of G. P.”

Of other sportsmen who were at Burton Hall with the Bishops court Hunt, the Baronet gives a generous list.

THE FIRST PACKS

“ From Kildare and around the Curragh came the Fitzgeralds, Hamiltons, Aylmers, Kirwans and Dennises; from Wicklow all the followers of the house of Wentworth, the Stratfords, Westleys, Symses, Saunderses, Tighes, and Guns; from Kilkenny those allowed patriots and sportsmen to the backbone the Powers, John and Richard, the Bushes, Tighes and Giant Bayley; from Tipperary came the Matthews, the Riches, Chum Ponsonby, Butlers of Lowes Green, Coxes of Castletown, John Bailey of Desborough, Lord Cahir, the Tolces, Manserghs and Gorings. Such a meet of men and horses,” concludes the writer, “ take them all in all, were never before here congregated together or anywhere else to greet one man and follow one pack of hounds. I confess it made an impression on my youthful mind and frame then expanding into manhood that up to this hour and trotting on to fourscore has never been obliterated.”

These interesting recollections of Sir Joseph Hoare I think leave little doubt as to the importance of the Bishops court Hunt in 1792, or of the place organized fox-hunting already occupied in Ireland. Before passing on it may be worth while to print an old hunting song, still remembered in the district, which confirms the tradition of the Bishops court establishment. It was very kindly written out for me from memory by Mrs Ellen Murray of Templemills, Cellbridge, who told me

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

that it goes to a very pretty air to which she still sings it. I print the whole of its twelve verses without any apology because I regard it as a genuine popular ballad, evolved doubtless by the humbler followers of the hunt over their pipes and glasses, and altogether worthy of being preserved.

THE BISHOPSCOURT HUNT

You Irish gentlemen I pray draw near
And listen to what I do declare;
If you be fond to hunt the fox
To Bishopscourt I pray repair.

Last New Year's Day I chanced to stray
Abroad to take the pleasant air,
I heard a cry which raised my heart;
Straightway to them I did repair.

There I espied a numerous train
Of educated gentlemen.
If you're not of extraction great
You won't be let to hunt with them.

Mr Ponsonby he was there
And well prepared he was to go,
He was mounted on a gallant horse
Which went by the name of brave Stingo.

To Elverstown they all trained down
Into the covert where he lay;
Such a hunt in your life you ne'er did see
Nor heard tell of this many a day.

THE FIRST PACKS

Our staunch metal hounds, they fear no
 bounds,
 They followed him through thick and
 thin,
And through trick, herey, haggart, corn
 And they rolled him over on Blakestown
 Hill.

The fox being stout he wheeled about
 Unto Lord Miltown's waterfall,
The river Liffey there he crossed,
 Says he to himself, " I'll shun you all."

Mr Ponsonby being the first man up,
 It's after him he did leap in.
He sunk unto the bottom deep,
 And for his life was forced to swim.

Each man and horse was at a stand
 To see him plunging in the deep,
But Stingo brave that ne'er gave up,
 It's o'er the hole with him did sweep.

The standers by aloud did cry
 For fear he ne'er would chace no more,
But by lucky chance he reached the bank,
 And his flesh and clothes by the rocks was
 tore.

Through Monniemuck his course he took
 Through Ballintubber ground and o'er
He swam the lake and off did take
 Off to the cross of Ballymore.

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They spent that day in merry heart
And killed the fox which crowned the
sport,
And returned that night by moon so bright
To the sporting place called Bishops-
court.

The evidence of the existence of a hunt at Johnstown rests partly upon the fact that Sir John Kennedy, the first baronet, whose mastership of the Kildare Hounds will be the subject of a very important chapter of this record, succeeded to a tradition of sportsmanship in his family, and was the third representative of a very notable line of foxhunters. His grandfather, Mr John Kennedy, who died in 1758, and his father, Mr E. Kennedy, who died in 1811, both kept hounds, and there are old silver buttons still preserved by Sir John Kennedy, bearing the inscription "Johnstown Hunt." The existence of these buttons appears to me to place the matter beyond doubt. It is probable indeed that the Johnstown pack was one of the earliest running in Kildare, for I find among the Conolly papers a letter from a member of the family, Mr Charles Kennedy, to Mr Conolly which suggests that in the year 1780 there was no separate pack at Johnstown, but that at that date the Kennedys were supporters of Mr Conolly's hunt.

THE FIRST PACKS

Johnstown,
4th July, 1780.

Dear Sir,

This Day I gott from County Waterford, Four and a Halfe Brace of very Good Cubb Foxes, please to inform me where you will have them turned out.

Apprehend some of them had better be putt into my Shaws, but submitt the Disposall of them to you. Be so Good as to send your Huntsman in the morning to marke and turn them where you direct. They have been coming since Sunday, the Sooner they are Enlarged the better.

Am your Most Obedient Humble Servant,
CHARLES KENNEDY.

I am indebted to Sir Anthony Weldon for some most interesting papers which enable me to set out the origin of a subscription hunt in the year 1780. This, as will be seen, had no connexion with the present Kildare Hunt, but its doings have an interest, as forming a contribution to the sport of Kildare men in a bygone day; the lines upon which the hunt was run also present some points of interest.

Sir Anthony Weldon's ancestor, Mr Steuart Weldon, acted as honorary treasurer to the undertaking, and by good fortune the original minute book of proceedings has been preserved in the family, so that we may be present in the spirit at

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least, at a memorable meeting held on August 5, 1780, at Ballylinan, which resulted in the formation of the Ballylinan Hunt.

I may set out at length the few simple rules which governed the undertaking.

The original rules proposed for the establishment of a pack of Club Hounds to be kept at Ballylinan, which were afterwards unanimously agreed to by the subscribers.

1st. That each subscriber shall deposit with the Treasurer Half a Year's Subscription in advance.

2nd. That the Treasurer shall have leave to resign every half year.

3rd. With respect to the management of the Hounds in the Field, and the fixing of the country for hunting

That each subscriber have the Absolute Command of the Hounds and Huntsman for a fortnight, turn about, and that During His Fortnight He be as much the Master of them as if they were kept at his private expense.

4th. That if it answers any gentleman's convenience to keep the Hounds a night during his Fortnight out of their Kennel, He is to pay their expenses while they remain with him.

5th. That a subscription be opened for the purchase of a pack of good Harriers.

6th. In case the Huntsman or Whippers in horse falling lame Resolved that the subscriber who has

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the command of the Hounds when such accident happens do furnish horses for them during said fortnight.

7th. That the Uniform of the Subscribers be Brown Drab Cloth of Irish manufacture not exceeding 15 shillings per yd. with a cape of green velvet.

The first complete list of the subscribers who ran hounds on this novel plan is dated March 16, 1782, and is as follows.

1. The Earl of Roden	17	1	3
2. The Honble George Jocelyn	5	13	9
3. Thos. Kelly, Esqr.	22	15	0
4. Steuart Weldon, Esqr.	22	15	0
5. Edward Bever, Esqr.	11	7	6
6. James Molony, Esqr.	5	13	9
7. Revd. Anthony Weldon.	5	13	9
8. Tobias Murcell, Esqr.	5	13	9
9. Richd. Sherlock, Esqr.	5	13	9
10. John Purcell, Esqr.	5	13	9
11. John Brereton, Esqr.	5	13	9
12. Henry Bamtuck, Esqr.	11	7	6
13. Lord Conyngham	11	7	6
14. Lord Jocelyn.	11	7	6
	<hr/>		
	147	17	6

This strikes one as a modest subscription upon which to start even a pack of harriers, but an agreement between the Ballylinan Hunt and James

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Grace entered into on December 3, 1781, shows how it was managed.

“ Said James Grace engages to keep twenty couple of hounds at the least, sometimes more, sometimes less, as it may happen, for sixty guineas per annum.

“ Said James Grace engages to keep two horses for Huntsman and Boy eight months at Hay and Oats and four months at Grass, to be allowed one Barrell to each horse per Fortnight at Twenty Five Pounds pr. An.”

Grace also undertook to have ready within a week a “ Four horse stable with Bales and Racks that shall be judg’d convenient by the three inspecting members of the Hunt, the said Stable to be confined to the horses of the Hunt only ”; also to “ have the Kennel paved and the part where the Hounds lye under cover flagg’d by the 1st June next. The inspecting members for one year and one month from this day, 3rd Decr. 1781 were unanimously chosen, viz. Henry Bamtuck, Tobias Purcell, and Steuart Welldon, Esqrs,” who had full powers of discharging or otherwise punishing the servants of the hunt.

Here, then, is record of a pack of harriers of twenty couples with two horses for huntsman and whip run at a cost of £88 a year. I find that the

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hunt was in full cry, so to speak, on these modest lines, for the members were each allotted the terms of mastership by a meeting of December 1, 1782. The list seems worth setting out as showing the active sportsmen with the Ballylinan hunt for that season.

“ The Fortnight’s Hunting as drawn by Lotts
1st Decr. 1782.

1. Conyngham	Decr. 3rd.
2. Prime Sergeant Kelly	16th.
3. Sir John Parnell Bart.	30th.
4. James Molony	Jany. 13th. 1783.
5. Lord Jocelyn.	27th.
6. Roden.	Feby. 10th.
7. R. Sherlock	24th.
8. H. Bamtuck.	Mar. 10th.
9. G. Jocelyn.	24th.
10. T. Purcell.	Apr. 7th.
11. S. Weldon	21st.
12. J. Brereton	May 5th.
13. E. Bever.	19th.
14. A. Weldon.	June 2nd.”

The existing records of the Ballylinan Hunt are not very full, but they contain some details of interest. The subscription was eventually fixed at ten guineas, with an entrance fee of five guineas, this last being devoted to the fund for the horses of the hunt servants. The Hunt dined on the first Monday

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of each month at "James Grace's at Ballylinan" at the moderate charge of 2/8, play or pay, and each gentleman appearing without the hunt uniform was fined "five English shillings." In 1781 they elected a surgeon to the hunt, Mr Robert Johnston of Athy, who was obligingly invited to dine with the hunt at their monthly dinners. A jocular note in 1783 seems to mark one of those convivial meetings "Signed by order of Thistle Whippers, Jocelyn in the Chair, and Company much too sober this 6th of October 9 o'clock." The minutes show that the Hunt considered the proper price of "a good huntsman's horse" as "not exceeding twenty guineas" in 1783. In the same year they resolved "that each member of the hunt be obliged to nurse either at home or among their neighbours or tenants a couple of hounds during each twelve months." In the same year "Wm. Green was appointed gamekeeper to this Hunt during pleasure and allowed a green coat and a Halbert and such sallary as he shall be found to merit."

A minute of 1785 points to a state of affairs not unknown in similar institutions in more recent times.

Resolved that upon an Inspection of the Treasurer's accounts a great arrear appears to be due

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from some of the members, and that an application be made to them to discharge all demands now on them, and thereby keep the Hunt in that respectable situation they set out upon and always wish to continue in.

Sign'd by Order

TOBIAS PURCELL

Secy.

These sportsmen appear to have succeeded in that pious wish at least for a time. But in December of the same year, 1785, I find a minute of a meeting at "Thos. Doyle's house Ballykilcavan, Thos. Fitzgerald Esqr in the chair," when it was agreed that "Whereas it has been found necessary to remove the Hounds from Ballylinan and to establish the said Hounds at Ballykilcavan, resolved that the said Hunt be and hereby is to be henceforth called the Ballykilcavan Hunt."

As the Ballykilcavan Hunt accordingly I take leave of these gentlemen, to whose names in order to complete the muster I add those of Colonel Bruin, Mr Garnet Butler, Mr Daniel Brown, General Hunt Walsh, Capt. George Burdett, Major Hughes, Capt. Percival and Mr Matthew Casan. Their last contribution to the history of Kildare sport was a resolution "that in consequence of the high price of hay this year (1785) Thomas Doyle

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be allow'd fifteen guineas extraordinary for the keeping of two horses for this year only.

A Dublin bi-weekly newspaper, the *Constitution*, preserves mention of sport in Kildare which may perhaps be quoted as a last contribution to the scanty record of Kildare sport before the days of the present hunt.

“ Sat. Decr. 21st. 1799. Mr Henry requests that every Gentleman who may wish to hunt with his hounds will if possible do him the favour of coming to Straffan on Monday the 23rd inst. at 8 o'clock to consider measures for the promotion of the sport. The hounds will draw Kilashee Coverts same day at 10 o'clock.”

Under date of February 20, 1800, and the heading “ King's County Sport,” we have the following from the same paper.

“ Social Meet at T. Dooley's, Birr, on 24th Feb. 1800. Thomas Bernard Esqr. president. Mr. Eyre's foxhounds will draw the coverts on Monday Wednesday and Friday. . Messrs Bernard, Druight and Wellington's Harriers will hunt on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. A Ball and Supper at T. Fallows's Long Room on Wednesday night, and an Oyster Club on Thursday.

“ A main of cocks will be fought.

“ Sporting in all shapes during the week.”



SIR FENTON AYLMER, BART. M.F.H. 1798-1814.

CHAPTER III

SIR FENTON AYLMER AND MR A. HENRY 1798-1814

IN the absence of any information to the contrary, I should have been inclined to accept the generally received tradition that the Kildare Hunt is the result of a continuous development of the hunting establishment which we have seen established at Castletown by Mr Thomas Conolly at least as early as 1764, and that the present pack was descended from progenitors who owed much of their blood to the great pack at Belvoir. Subsequent inquiry rather pointed to the probability that the Kildare Hunt of to-day owed its origin to a fusion of the Castletown and Bishops court Hunts somewhere about the date of Squire Conolly's death, but a letter written by Sir Fenton Aylmer to the second Duke of Leinster, which is among the papers so kindly placed at my disposal by Capt. E. N. Conolly, gives pause to such speculations.

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Quarters,
Maynooth,
Sunday, 30th July, 1798.

My Lord,

Having heard that Mr Ponsonby has given away the hounds to Lord Lismore, and not knowing exactly the terms, or what country he means to draw, may I request your Grace's permission to hunt Cartown (Carton)? My wish is to have the country north of the Grand Canal, the Longwood country, and also Westmeath, the most of which I have already got.

Mine are now all foxhounds, most of them whelps of the Duke of Bedford's.

Should you not have made any previous promise to Lord Lismore, to whom I have also written on the subject, as well as to Mr Ponsonby, your compliance with my wishes will much oblige your Grace's Obedient

And very Sincere Humble Servant

FENTON AYLMER.

From this letter it is quite clear that the hounds kept at Bishops court by Mr Ponsonby were given to Lord Lismore out of the country, and consequently that the existing Kildare can claim no descent from his establishment. The letter seems also to deny any connexion between our hunt and that of Mr Conolly at Castletown. It is certainly impossible to identify the hounds which Sir Fenton

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describes as “ most of them whelps of the Duke of Bedford’s ” with the pack at Castletown, whose early history and composition I have examined in the last chapter. The phrase, too, “ mine are now all foxhounds ” rather points to the inference that until a date not very long before 1798 Sir Fenton had been hunting a pack of harriers, presumably from Donadea Castle. Further, it is beyond any reasonable doubt that the Castletown pack was no longer in existence, for in that case Sir Fenton would scarcely be contemplating hunting another pack of hounds so near as Donadea. What became of the Castletown pack I have been unable to ascertain, but they were probably sold out of the country at Mr Conolly’s death. In all the circumstances, I have no hesitation whatever in regarding Sir Fenton Aylmer as the founder of the present Kildare Hunt, and the hounds he describes, which he had apparently just got into working order in 1798, as the original parents of the existing pack. There is confirmation of this proposition in the fact that when the first existing records of the Kildare Hunt Club begin in the year 1804 Sir Fenton was master of the Kildare hounds.

Before passing on to consider those records I may perhaps mention here a recollection of Mr Robert Kennedy of Baronsrath, which is the last memory of the great hunting tradition which once

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centred at Bishopscourt I have been able to discover.

Mr Kennedy, very kindly writing to me in the summer of 1910, said:

“Nearly 80 years ago a very young child was sent up to bring down his father (he was on crutches from a fall in the hunting field, for he was master and huntsman) to see an exquisitely dressed old gentleman who had called to see him. His father limped down in an old blue dressing gown that wanted darning.

“In broken tones that old gentleman, Mr Frederick Ponsonby, told the master and huntsman, John Kennedy of Johnstown, that he was leaving the country, having sold Bishopscourt, and from a box he took out a large piece of plate, which he presented to the master, to be run for by the farmers of Kildare, to be won three years successively before becoming the property of the winner.

“That gift was subsequently known as the Ponsonby Bowl, and was so run for at the Kildare Hunt Races. It was ultimately won by the Honable. Berkeley Wodehouse, who posed as a farmer in having married Mr Ponsonby's niece, Miss Fanny Holmes, and settled at Athgarvon Lodge, now Mr Pallin's. Miss Fanny Holmes was a famous rider, the only lady that hunted in those days and a great sportswoman and supporter of the Curragh Coursing Club, for when the Wodehouses left Kildare, down went the Curragh Coursing. Athgarvon

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Bridge was built solely by Mrs Wodehouse's influence with the Kildare Grand Jury."

Mr Frederick Ponsonby (who was the fifth and youngest son of Mr Wm Brabazon Ponsonby, afterwards first Baron Ponsonby, whose hunting establishment at Bishops court Sir Philip Hoare described so fully for us in the last chapter) was a great supporter of hunting.

"He contested Kildare," continues Mr Robert Kennedy, "but was beaten by a so-called adventurer. He was beloved by all, and upon his death in 1849 his funeral was met by the people of Rathcole, the coffin taken from the hearse and carried to Oughterard Hill, where he was buried. The bridge over the canal at Baronsrath is known as Ponsonby Bridge, for that name is engraved on a granite slab on each side. In a cottage close by is to be seen on the dresser half of a very handsome dish. It is kept there to this day in honour and in memory of him they called the Old Master. I agree with the old peasant when he said, 'God be with the old times.' "

It is a matter of great satisfaction to all Kildare sportsmen that that honoured name of Ponsonby is again identified with the Hunt in the person of the present master, Captain Talbot Ponsonby.

As will have been gathered from the preceding

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pages, my information as to the origins of sport in the Kildare country has been gathered with difficulty from evidence, scrappy and fragmentary at the best, and necessarily incomplete. From the year 1804, however, I am on firmer ground. In that year the first records of the Kildare Hunt Club begin. These are contained in an old minute book which records in a rather desultory and imperfect manner the proceedings of the club, the result of its ballots for election, the names of its committee and honorary officials, and a meagre account of some of their doings. The record was very imperfectly kept, as is evident not only from the appearance of the records themselves, but also from the comment of some of the older members of the Hunt who remembered the period and looked through them later. They extend only to the year 1839, but short and imperfect as they are, they at least present some basis of fact and date upon which to continue our undertaking, and they will give us a list, certainly incomplete, of the more prominent of former members of the Kildare Hunt Club.

The original minute book is still in the possession of Sir John Kennedy at Johnstown, who has very kindly placed it at my disposal and allowed me to have it copied. The first entry is the record of a meeting, on April 28, 1804, of eleven members of the club for the purpose of electing candi-

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dates for admission, and their balloting resulted in the election of twenty other gentlemen. I note here that the committee comprised the following names, and as there is no mention of any proceedings constituting the club, for our purposes these gentlemen must be reckoned as the original members of the Kildare Hunt Club in 1804. They are Sir Fenton Aylmer, Bart., M.F.H., the Revd Cramer Roberts, Mr Edward Hendrick, Mr Richard Hornidge, Mr Robert Hamilton, Mr R. Ponsonby, Mr Dennis, Mr Clinch, Mr D. Kirwan, Mr Graydon, and Mr O'Reilly. To these may be added the names of a few other gentlemen whose names appear in subsequent entries in the minutes, but are not included in any of the lists of elections after the first records of 1804. These are Mr Bateman, Mr E. La Touche, Colonel Lumm, Admiral Fish, Mr Richard Conolly, and Mr William Colville.

The inference I draw from the earlier pages of this old minute book is that a club had been formed soon after Sir Fenton established the pack in 1798, which included the names I have set out and probably some others, and that it was only in 1804 that the increasing number of sportsmen in the district wishing to join suggested a definite organization and the keeping of records.

These records at first are very scanty. Apart from three other meetings for balloting held at long

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intervals between September, 1804, and June, 1806, there is no business of any kind entered in the book. We have as yet no mention of subscription or entrance fee, and can only guess that the chief expense of maintaining the Hunt fell upon the master. It is not till December, 1806, that I find an account of the proceedings of a committee comprising Sir Fenton Aylmer, Lord Rossmore, Mr John Narney, the Revd Kildare Borrowes and Mr Robert Borrowes, who met to deliberate upon several matters which have a present interest.

These proceedings, I think, show that the Kildare Hunt Club was already a well-organized institution. Mr Kildare Borrowes was acting as honorary treasurer and submitted his accounts of "Receipts and Disbursements of the Hunt for 1805-6," which, however, are unfortunately not set out. We are also without particulars of "the Coverts rented and those presented to the Hunt by their Owners rent free," which would have been of great interest. There was a question before the committee of taking ground for a covert at Ballyhook from a man named Cardiff; of another covert taken over on behalf of the Hunt by Mr John La Touche from a farmer named Hibbs, who, I note, is allowed to cut three acres of gorse during the coming year in satisfaction of a claim for arrears of rent due to him by the club. I find that a covert

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rented at Lyons cost the Hunt £10 a year. Other business concerned the earthstoppers and their operations. The chief of these was a man named Cormick ; those at Kilmaroney were dismissed, and for some reason not stated it was decided to dig up the earths at Silliot Hill, and that the best terms possible should be made with a tenant named Neill for permission to do so.

At the suggestion of Lord Rossmore it was decided to collect a shilling from each person in the field on hunting days, the proceeds to be devoted to the earthstoppers' fund, and I gather that this collection was additional to one already in operation for general purposes.

A month later, namely on January 5, 1807, there is an interesting note of a resolution passed by a committee who had before them " a list of the articles of plate, the property of the Hunt for their use " then in the hands of Mr M. Kelly of Kildare. Sir Fenton Aylmer was asked " to be good enough to take the trouble of taking the plate into his keeping, which he agreed to do." This possession of plate obviously used on convivial occasions points to the probability that the hunt club had been in existence as an organized body of gentlemen long before 1807.

The first general meeting of the Hunt of which there is any record was that held at Timolin on

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February 23, 1807. Lord Rossmore presided, and the proceedings are of some interest as showing the lines upon which the organization of the Hunt proceeded a century ago. It was then decided to fix the number of the committee at five to be elected annually, and with the remark that "the Revd. Mr Ponsonby having expressed a wish not to take an active part in the direction of the hunting," the meeting proceed to elect the Revd Kildare Borrowes, Mr A. Henry, Mr Thomas Graydon, Mr H. Thompson and Mr John Marney as committee for the ensuing year. Their meetings were to be held on the first Monday of each month at Kilcullen.

With the election of this committee came the very important decision to divide the Kildare country into five districts, each presided over by a member and forming a little kingdom in which he reigned alone, with the power (with the assent of a majority of his colleagues) of "destroying earths and doing all other acts which shall seem to him necessary," drawing on the treasurer for the necessary expenses. The Committee were open to suggestions from members of the Hunt as to the desirability of forming new coverts, and in pursuance of this resolution I notice they were recommended to form three acres of covert at Knockrack and four at Kilkea.

It may be noted that the names of candidates for

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admission to the club came before a general meeting of the Hunt, after being proposed and seconded by two members. Eleven was a quorum at meetings for election and one black ball excluded. An entrance fee of five guineas was imposed, the first mention of any source of revenue for the club, apart from the cap money noted above.

Other minutes at this meeting preserve records of the presentation of coverts " free of all expense " by Lord Rossmore at Rathsallagh, by Mr James Conolly at Kilkea, and by Mr Richard Conolly at Knockbrack. Mr Robert Hamilton, Mr James Farrell, Mr John Narney and Mr Robert Borrowes each obligingly proposed to present the Hunt with " a Survey of the Hunting Country, making out the several Coverts, their respective distances from each other, Bogs, Rivers and Streams, free of expense," surveys which would be of the greatest interest now could they be found. There was a proposal for the establishment of a club house at Naas with " certain accommodation for the members of the hunt," and a committee was appointed to consider the matter, and to report such progress as they shall make at the first Monday of the next June meeting; but I cannot find that their deliberations resulted in the establishment of any club house.

Finally was passed a resolution agreeing upon a uniform for the club, which has a certain interest

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for us. This was to consist of “ Blue Coat, Black velvet Cape and a plain Buff Waistcoat.” It may be remembered that this dress is similar to that in which the Irish baronet saw the sportsmen of the Bishops court Hunt arrayed in the year 1792.

A month later, viz. in March, 1807, I find the result of the deliberations of the committee who had been empowered to divide the Kildare country into districts set out at length, and their report is of value as showing the exact extent of the country in that year.

The first of these divisions was administered by Mr Nairne, and it comprised Arthurstown, Furness, Cannycourt, Firmount, Harristown, Ballyhook, Russborough, Trapersfields, Hylands (near Blessington), Thornbury, Ardenode, Sallymount, Ballytracy, Glending, Logstown, Blessington Park, Mullaghs Hill and Poolatreucher.

Mr A. Henry took charge of the second district, which included Wolfestown, Bishops court, Kerdiffstown, Bellevilla, Lyons and Lyonside, Tullfarris, Palmerstown, Straffan, Ardrass and Lodge Park, part of Wolfestown, Burnhall, Tynahinch, Castlesize, Millicent, Landenstown, Oldtown, Poul-a-Phouca and Bishopsland.

Mr Graydon, in charge of the third district, ruled over Merritownsrack and Aghaboe, Rosetown, Narragmore, Green Hills, Castlerow, Killashee, Cra-

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dockstown, Kilrush, Shanra, Castlemartin and
Kilcullen.

Mr Thompson presided over the fourth division, including Gouchers and Horseshoe, Rathsallagh, Kilkea, Knockbrack, Mr Wall's, Maidenhead, Corbally, Grangecon, Yellowearths, Redbanks, Johnstown and Steelstown, Rawbawn and New Sewers.

The fifth district was that of Ballysax alone, and was in charge of Mr Borrowes.

Altogether I gather a distinct impression of a business-like efficiency pervading the management of the Hunt in the early years of the last century. Members of the Committee failing to attend a meeting without good reason, for example, were fined a guinea. I note that earths at Jigginstown, Blackhall and Brownstown were ordered to be destroyed, and that Kilmaroney demesne was given up as a covert. The head earthstopper, Cormack, was paid half a guinea a week "board wages while he remained out during the summer months on the business of the hunt." From the proceedings of a committee which met in the board-room of the Kilcullen Dispensary I find that the poultry fund was a burning question with the hunt as early as 1807. A circular letter was then sent to each member of the hunt in which are recorded some admirable remarks on the subject. The Secretary was instructed to express the gratification the

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Committee would feel "that this favourite sport should be attended with as many advantages as possible to the country and with as few disadvantages or injury." With this object in view they had passed resolutions "that though they wished to give satisfaction and attention to the people of the country with regard to any losses or damages sustained by foxes, yet in so doing they presume it will not be expected that they will go beyond their means, and what the state of things or subscriptions will admit of." They acknowledged that "at times, much contrary to their wishes, they were only able to answer in part the various demands for losses sustained made upon them." They decided that in future all applications for losses sustained must be presented and vouched for by a member or subscriber to the hunt "and not by affidavit," and they asked members to prefer the claims of "those alone who can least afford such losses" and to reduce the claims "as near as possible to the real and actual loss, a course which would considerably assist the committee in giving that general satisfaction to all, which they would be most anxiously disposed to do."

A letter placed upon record at a meeting held at Timolin on March 25, 1808, may be set out here.

SIR FENTON AYLMER AND MR A. HENRY

Sir,

Sir Fenton Aylmer having communicated to the Hunt your having lately dismissed from your service a servant who had been detected in destroying some foxes from the covers at Landenstown, I am requested to assure you that the gentlemen of the Hunt do not fail to entertain a due sense of this instance of so liberal attention as well as obliging disposition to promote the accommodation and wishes of the Hunt.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

LEONARD KILBEE: Secy.

Kilcullen. 4th April 1808.

To John Digby, Esqr:

I find that the culprit thus punished was Mr Digby's butler.

Other notes from these old minutes may be added. The Secretary, Mr Kilbee, received a salary of £20 a year; on March 25, 1808, it was resolved "that in future the collection of tenpenny pieces shall be discontinued"; April 8 of the same year saw a change in the Hunt uniform. It was then decided by ballot, "that the future hunting uniform, coat and waistcoat of the Kildare Hunt shall be plain scarlet, the Dress Uniform to remain the same, namely Blue cloth coat, Black Velvet Cape and Buff Waistcoat" and a link connecting the

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Kildare Hunt with the old Bishops court pack was thus partially severed. It may be noted too that the Committee met during these years variously at Morrison's Hotel, Dawson Street, Dublin; Timolin; the Dispensary at Kilcullen; McDonald's at Naas; Sackville Street, Dublin; and at the Standhouse, Curragh. Fox earths were destroyed at Lyons, and Lord Cloncurry presented the Hunt with another cover in their stead. Coverts at Ballymore and at Cannycourt were ordered to be "cut away in part to put them in a better way of hunting"; and I find the earthstopper Nowlan was sent out on a week's tour "to attend to the different coverts of the hunting country to see that they are kept free of any trespass or damage."

The general efficiency of the management at this period was undoubtedly due to the zeal and energy of the Honorary Treasurer, the Revd Kildare Borrowes, qualities which were heartily acknowledged when in June, 1809, that gentleman felt obliged to resign his office. At a meeting held on the 19th of that month Sir Fenton Aylmer read his letter of resignation, a letter which preserves for us some information as to the state of the Kildare Hunt in 1809.

From the way things are left methodized (says Mr Borrowes) from the pains which have been

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taken to instruct a clerk or secretary, and from the way the numerous engagements or debts of the Hunt have all been discharged. . . . I have the satisfaction to observe that if all this continues to be uniformly and urgently pursued, it cannot fail to afford to the Hunt a certain and most handsome establishment, and such a one as must be highly gratifying and animating to its views and purposes.

This appears to have been a very satisfactory state of things, but it is significant of the way in which the excellent Mr Kilbee kept his records that there is no hint of the source from which the club drew its revenue except the mention of the five guinea entrance fee already recorded. Of regular subscription there is no mention at all, though it is plain that such must have been in force, and it would appear that the collection of cap money was abandoned by the resolution as to the tenpenny pieces I have quoted above.

Sir Fenton Aylmer's letter in reply worthily places upon record the eminent services of Mr Kildare Borrowes.

My Dear Sir,

I most fully participate in the regret expressed yesterday by the Members of the Kildare Hunt (whose sentiments I am directed to communicate) on reading the letter you authorized me to lay before them resigning your situation as Treasurer

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and expressing your wish as not longer being one of the Committee.

We feel ourselves much concerned that any necessity should arise in your mind to have induced you to that resolution, and to have deprived us of the great zeal, interest, exertion and support of system which you have manifested in your conduct and so much for the advantage and advancement of the Hunt; in consequence of which we perceive the whole arrangement as regularly laid down as to leave but little trouble to your successor.

We have still to add that we hope those more important duties, which no doubt a greater attention to have induced you to form such a determination, will not deprive us of some occasional assistance and zeal as a member of the Hunt.

I remain, My Dear Sir, with sincere regards,
Your obedient and very humble servant,
FENTON AYLMER.

There is no doubt as to Sir Fenton's sentiments as expressed in this letter which I print as it comes to me. I think his shaky grammar has probably resulted from the several transcriptions by Mr Kilbee and others which have intervened between the written letter and the printed page.

From an explanation of such documents as exist, I have been able to identify less than a score of gentlemen as members of the Hunt when Sir

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Fenton Aylmer first appears as Master in 1804. There must have been a large number of hunting men in Kildare at that time whose names have not come down to us. I have already set out the names of those we must consider as the original members of the Hunt Club. Of these Sir Fenton claims first notice.

Sir Fenton Aylmer was the eighth baronet of Donadea Castle, Kildare, and son of Sir Fitzgerald Aylmer, his predecessor in the title. Sir Fitzgerald married Miss Elizabeth Cole, daughter of Mr Fenton Cole, of Silverhill, co. Fermanagh, a brother of Lord Mount Florence. Sir Fitzgerald had been prominent in public affairs during an active life; had represented Old Leighton, co. Carlow, in the Irish Parliament in 1769-75 and Harristown, Kildare, in 1790-3. This family tradition of public service was continued by Sir Fenton, who in 1794, the year following his father's death, was nominated High Sheriff of Kildare. He had taken his degree at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1788, and upon succeeding to the title and estates married Miss Jane Grace Evans Freke, daughter of Sir John Evans Freke.

During the rebellion of 1798 Sir Fenton commanded a small company of Yeomanry, and upon one occasion, going with a detachment of fourteen dragoons to Kilcock, he and his men were nearly

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ambushed by William Aylmer, who was at the head of a band of rebels in the district. Sir Fenton, however, had taken the precaution to send forward four men as an advanced guard, of whom they killed three, and in so doing disclosed the ambush and enabled Sir Fenton to retire with the rest of the company to Sallins. It was only after the cessation of the troubles of the Rebellion that fox-hunting again became possible, and in my opinion Sir Fenton's mastership represents the beginning of the continuous and organized fox-hunting in Kildare which began after the '98 and is still carried on with such success by the present Kildare Hunt.

A writer in the *Sporting Magazine* for 1832, calling himself "Remembrancer," gives some few details of information respecting the Kildare Hunt under Sir Fenton's management which will be of interest.

It was in the later years of this gentleman's management that I first saw them (the Kildare Hounds) and they were then hunted by the celebrated John Grennon. What sources they had been obtained from I was not at the pains to inquire, but they were to all intents and purposes the English foxhound but rather lighter and less bony than the general run, and decidedly so in respect of the Kilkenney. They were well appointed and horsed,

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and Grennon was aided by Matthews, a son of old George, and his own son, a very small juvenile, as whippers in.

Grennon had the reputation of being the best huntsman in Ireland, and perhaps had he been in a woodland country such as Essex (the Queen's County is the only one in Ireland that approaches to that character), he would have fully merited it. But in such an open country as Kildare, at least, a country which, though stiffly fenced with ditches and banks, is devoid of wood, the coverts being nearly all gorse, he was too quick, I might almost say too tricky. The subtlest varmint that ever robbed a henroost met with his match in John, and like all very clever men, he was ever fond of displaying his talents. Consequently his hounds were accustomed to trust more to him than to their own noses, the results of which, despite his acknowledged cleverness, were the reverse often of satisfactory. He possessed all the requisites of a huntsman, a quick eye, a ready ear, an excellent voice with some very peculiar but tuneable halloos, and was also a sufficiently resolute horseman, though rather nice about his kind of horse.

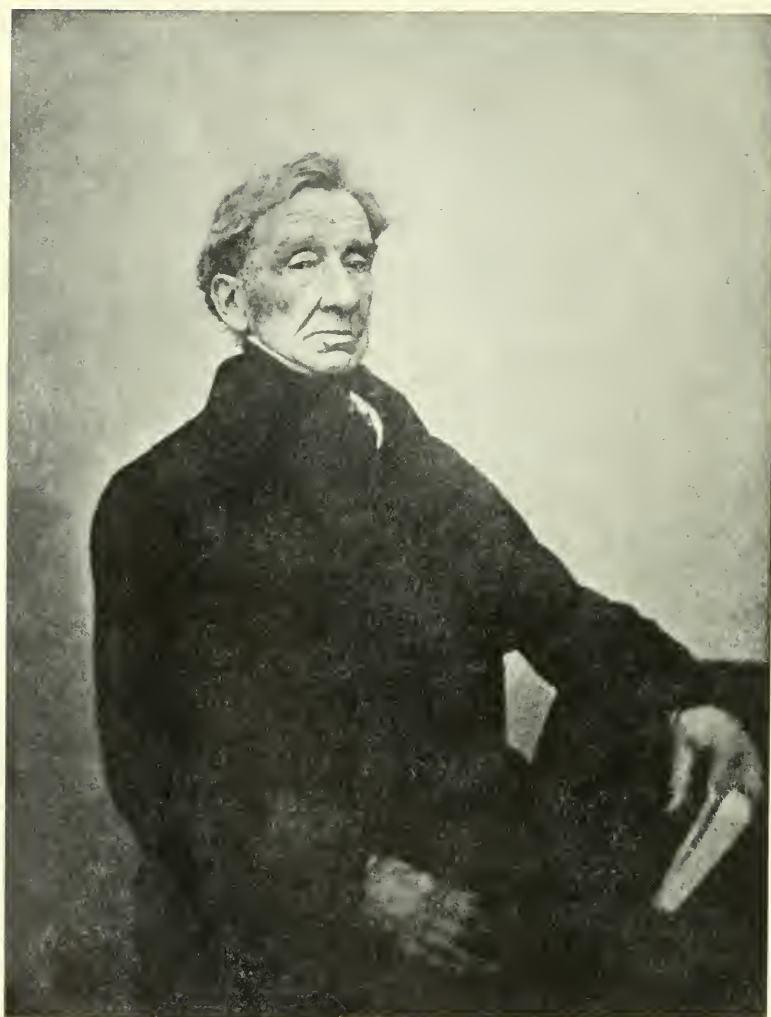
I have been able to find only a single further reference to sport under Sir Fenton Aylmer's mastership, a notice in the *Dublin Star* of Thursday, November 22, 1804. It runs as follows:

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

Dublin. Novr. 15th. Sporting.

Sir Fenton Aylmer's Hounds with the Kildare Hunt had an excellent run from Corbally on Monday morning last. The hounds found just at daylight, and forcing the fox immediately from this famous hill, he tried both Davidstown and Yellow Earths, and finding them shut, he went off gallantly through Hughestown, Stratford and Belleek Hills, where being turned by country people, he went off beautifully for Friarstown and Turnaunt, in which he was run to ground. The scent lay so high over all this fine grass country and the hounds carried such a head, that all the horsemen were beat in the beginning. There was only a Huntsman and two Gentlemen that got in at the end of the hunt by the advantage of knowing the shortest line of country.

There is a very gruesome story associated with Sir Fenton's mastership, well known orally at least, but which has seldom appeared in the printed page, though it is undoubtedly authentic. One of the hunt servants at the kennels was waked at night by the baying of the hounds, and got up to see the cause. He discovered a fight in progress between some of them, and that the whole pack was in a turmoil. He went down as he was, dressed only in a nightshirt, in order to quell the riot, and entered the kennel. The hounds failed to recognize him without his kennel clothes, fell upon him,



MR. ARTHUR HENRY, M.F.H. 1810-1812.

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and tore him to pieces. Mr Hans Aylmer tells me that he has often heard the story from his grandmother, who was Sir Fenton Aylmer's daughter.

Sir Fenton's mastership came to an end by his resignation in July, 1810, a resignation which was accompanied by his generous gift of the pack he had created and had hunted for twelve years to the Kildare Hunt Club. The appreciation with which Sir Fenton's services to sport and to the Kildare Hunt were regarded, was very suitably acknowledged by a resolution of the Hunt passed at a meeting held on July 28, 1810, at Dawson Street, Dublin, in the following terms:

Resolved unanimously that the thanks of the hunt be returned to Sir Fenton Aylmer for the spirited manner in which he has conducted the country during the time the hounds were in his possession, and for the liberal present he now makes of them to the Hunt.

At the meeting of July 28, 1810, which received Sir Fenton Aylmer's resignation, Mr Arthur Henry, of Lodge Park, the acting honorary treasurer of the Hunt, took over the mastership from Sir Fenton's able hands, and a resolution of the meeting may be quoted as showing the organization of the hunt in that year.

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Resolved that we whose names are hereunto subscribed do promise to pay annually to the Treasurer of the Hunt the sums annexed to our respective names for the purpose of defraying the expenses of such hounds, horses, servants, etc., as Mr Henry shall think necessary, each person agreeing to pay the amount of his subscription previous to the 1st of November.

Resolved that the whole management of the hounds, and also of the hunting of the country for the ensuing year be committed to the care of Mr Henry with full power to purchase such horses, to hire and discharge such servants, and fully to act in all respects as to hounds and hunting as he shall think fit.

Mr John Narney succeeded the new Master as Treasurer, and from another resolution passed at the meeting it would appear that the Hunt Club was at that time suffering from a difficulty common among institutions of the sort, that is unpunctuality in the payment of subscriptions. There is, unfortunately, no record of the names of the public-spirited individuals who subscribed to the list mentioned in the resolution, but I take note of the minute as an attempt, at least, at an early date to adopt the modern method of a guaranteed subscription for the hunt.

To judge from the minute book, the Hunt con-

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tinued under Mr Henry in the prosperity it had enjoyed under Sir Fenton Aylmer's management. The elections recruited the membership with a constant stream of new blood, and such records as exist relate almost solely to the necessary payment of earthstoppers and of country people alleged to be suffering from the depredations of the fox.

I have, unhappily, been unable to discover anything about the sport experienced under Mr Henry. He himself in later days was strangely silent as to any of his doings, and the same reticence extended to his sons. But the tradition is that things were done on a very elaborate and complete scale, so much so that his immediate successor was chaffed as "Cheap Jack" in comparison. Mr Henry's descendant, Mr Arthur Henry, of Ballinabarney, Rathnew, co. Wicklow, has very kindly searched among the family papers for any information bearing on the subject of fox-hunting, but has been able to discover very little. Under date of May 3, 1813, he finds that Mr Henry "paid subscriptions for Kennel £34 2 6, July 9th. 1813; paid Mr Fitzgerald rent of Ballyragget Covert £8 14 10½, 1814; Paid Subscription to Kildare Hounds to 1st. Novr. 1814, sent to Mr Annesley £22 15 0." entries which do not help us very much. The two last, however, would seem to point to the fact that there was a regular subscription of five guineas odd to the

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Hunt, and that Mr Henry contributed £22 15s. to the special fund already mentioned.

Mr Henry kept the hounds at Farm Hill (now known as Clonaglis) at Boston (Lyons) Fox covert. "I knew and remember him very well," Mr Robert Kennedy tells me, "and was often at Lodge Park in his time. He never mentioned anything about his mastership, nor do I ever remember his hunting in my father's time. I was at school with two of his sons, and knew the others very well indeed, but not one word did I ever hear about their father's mastership. I expect he did things very well, because he told me that when my father became master they called him 'Cheap Jack' because he did not do things well. Mr Henry made Lodge Park, and planted every tree you see there."

As already indicated, Mr Henry's mastership passed without any incident which was considered important enough to be recorded in the old minute book. I gather that all the meetings both of Hunt and Committee were held at Johnstown Inn during his reign, and it was there that a circular letter to members was drafted on December 16, 1812, announcing its termination. He then requested, through the Secretary, that a general meeting might be called on the 31st of the same month to accept his resignation and appoint a successor.

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Mr Henry's services to the Hunt were then acknowledged in the following resolution:

Resolved that Arthur Henry Esqr. be requested to accept the thanks of the Hunt for the zealous, sportsmanlike and handsome manner in which he has conducted the hunting and management of the hounds during the time he had the same under his direction.

Sir Fenton Aylmer, Mr Kildare Borrowes and Mr John Kennedy acted as a Committee to inspect Mr Henry's and Mr Narney's accounts, which, needless to say, they found "correct" in every particular, and that there was a balance of £6 8s. 5d. due to the Treasurer, and one of £91 11s. 8½d. to the Master, so accurate was the book-keeping of those gentlemen.

This Committee recorded their high approval of the exertions of Mr Henry and Mr Narney, and on January 29, 1813, an additional resolution was passed to the effect

That the thanks of the Hunt are justly due and are hereby given to them for all the trouble they have therein used, as well as their general exertions so much taken towards the maintenance and support of the establishment.

There is no mention in the minutes of any difficulty of finding a successor to Mr Henry, but I

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think it may be assumed that in taking the hounds a second time at short notice Sir Fenton Aylmer performed a service of great value to the Hunt, and at very considerable cost to himself. The efficient discharge of the duties of M.F.H. in a country like the Kildare is a tax upon the time and energy of any Master, apart altogether from the strain upon his purse, and when, as I learn from Mr Hans Aylmer, there was the added difficulty of poor health in Sir Fenton's case, the sacrifice was all the greater on his part. His filling of the gap caused by the resignation of Mr Henry in 1812, and the efficient discharge of the duties he so generously undertook at a moment of difficulty was a public-spirited action which certainly deserves recognition in any record of the Kildare Hunt.

Under his second reign there is every indication that the Club progressed in all prosperity, the elections continually added new names to the Club list, and it seems clear that building operations were undertaken on a considerable scale, for on January 28 I find that Sir Fenton, Sir Wm Hort and Mr A. Henry were asked to act as a Committee "to examine the accounts of Abraham Tyrrell, the contractor, for building the kennel, and to report their proceedings to the Hunt, who are requested to meet at Johnstown on Monday the 8th March next." The result of their examination was unfor-

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unately left unrecorded by the Secretary, so I am unable to say where the kennels were built in that year.

There is no other official record of any present interest to be found among the scanty minutes of this early period; but it was during the opening days of Sir Fenton Aylmer's second Mastership that occurred that memorable run after a hill fox which ended in such disaster, and is talked of in Kildare to-day. The scene of this accident is well known to tourists and picnic parties from Dublin, the terrific gorge through which the Liffey falls at Poul-a-Phouca. I am again fortunate in finding in the pages of the old *Sporting Magazine* an account of the run, and as it is the narrative of an eye-witness, one of the few sportsmen who were up at the terrible finish, I shall quote it in full.

It is to the gentleman who hid his identity under the signature of "Remembrancer," whom I have already quoted regarding John Grennon, that I am again indebted, and he thus wrote to the *Sporting Magazine* for 1832:

It was in the last year of Sir Fenton's management and of Grennon's hunting these hounds that a calamity befell them which almost exterminated them, and which altogether is so singular, though it is not without a parallel, that I shall take the liberty to narrate it.

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The hounds met in the month of November at the cross Roads of Tipper, and after drawing a neighbouring gorse blank were trotting on through Glending to Troopers Field when from a small unenclosed scrub of hazel a large greyhound fox jumped up almost among the hounds. He proved a mountaineer from Wicklow, for disregarding the adjacent earths and coverts, he made straight for the Wicklow Hills over such a country and at such a pace as flung the whole field with the exception of two, who, being on that day best mounted, and having fortunately been riding in advance of the hounds, got such a start as enabled them to keep in sight. Indeed, though the country was for Ireland open, the hills were so severe that nothing but blood could live through it, and one of these nags was thorough, the other better than three parts, bred.

He passed Liffey Head, and without a check gained the romantic rocks, plantation and waterfall of Pole Ovoca, co. Wicklow, where the river Ovoca, so celebrated by Anacreon Moore,* is precipitated over a high and rugged ridge of rocks, and which was then unusually swollen by a succession of rainy weather. In this plantation on the other side of the Ovoca was the villain's den, and

* A mistake of the writer's. It is the Liffey that falls through the gorge of Poul-a-Phouca, the Gaelic equivalent of "Devil's Cauldron." The waters of the Avonbeg and Avonmore unite near Castle Howard and run through the Vale of Avoca to the sea at Arklow. It is this Meeting of the Waters which is the subject of Moore's well-known poem.

as it came in view, the hounds were close at his brush; a distance of twelve miles, all nearly against the hill, having been done in fifty-five minutes. To reach this highland home he had to cross the river, and no other but the desperate alternative of passing it above the fall, where, being narrowly enclosed by two rocks, it was diminished to the width of a wide brook. This he attempted and was swept down the fall with twelve couple and a half of the leading hounds, who had thrown themselves after him with the same headlong and desperate resolution. When Jack Grennon and the writer of this, who were the two next that got up after those already mentioned, arrived, they were all in one *mêlée*, fox and hounds, in the foaming eddies under the fall; some killed in the descent, others maimed but yet living, among whom was "Caitiff"; and some one or two almost exhausted reached land. I do not just recollect, nor do I pretend to pointed accuracy, but I think Skylark, a young bitch, a daughter of Kilkenny Harbinger, and afterwards celebrated in the Kildare, was the sole one who escaped.

When Grennon saw the *élite* of his pack thus swept from before his eyes, he stood, for assistance was impossible, for some time like a statue, but when he was assured by their lifeless remains floating in the pool below the fall of the loss of two particular veterans whose names I have forgotten, he could stand it no longer, but burst into tears, and wept long and bitterly.

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This accident happened long before the existing bridge at Poul-a-Phouca was built, and I have been unable to find any print or drawing of the spot of a date near to that of the disaster. The illustration opposite, however, gives a very clear idea of the dangerous nature of the place, and is taken from a plate in Willis's *Scenery and Antiquities of Ireland*, published shortly after the bridge was built. I suppose the gorge to have been cleared of much of its brushwood and timber to facilitate the building of the bridge. In the present day, it is again much overgrown.

It may be worthy of note that a similar accident on a smaller scale was only narrowly avoided during the season of 1909-10.

Sir Fenton's second mastership was brought to an end by his resignation on October 10, 1814, a resignation dictated beyond all doubt by a rapidly failing health. It was only two years later that he died of consumption at Cork at the early age of forty. Of his personality I have been able to gather very little, but Mr A. Aylmer tells me that he remembers his grandmother often speaking of the hounds at Donadea, which she well recollected, and that Sir Fenton "was a small man, full of spirits, rather boisterous and a great spend-thrift." From what I have written above, it will be clear that, contrary to the received opinion which



POUL A FOUCHA.

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ascribes the foundation of the Kildare Hunt to Mr T. Conolly, the credit is due to Sir Fenton, and that a chief part of the success of the hunt which has been enjoyed by several generations of foxhunters who have hunted in Kildare since his day is owing to the generous sportsman who died untimely at Cork in 1816.

I am further indebted to Sir Anthony Weldon for some old memoranda which disclose the existence of another small hunting establishment in Kildare at the beginning of the last century; a short account of it may well conclude the chapter of Sir Fenton Aylmer's Mastership with which it was contemporary. The Leinster Harriers were formed at a meeting held at Athy, when the following gentlemen with that purpose in view subscribed various sums ranging from five guineas to five and twenty in order to form the pack.

Colonel FitzGerald, Colonel Weldon, Revd A. Weldon, Mr Benj. Braddell, Mr Wm Cuffe, Mr Thos O'Mara, Mr Wm Caulfield, Mr J. H. Farrage, Mr Robt Johnston, Mr J. M. Johnston, Mr Michael Dillon, Mr Wm Richardson, Mr Thos Roe, Mr Thos. Fitzgerald, Mr Andrew Conolly, Mr Wheeler Barrington, Revd Wm Sutton, Mr Fred Trench, Mr Robt Cooke, Mr John Butler, Mr Wm Allen, Mr James Fitzgerald, Mr Wm Verschoye, Mr Thos Rawson, The Duke of

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Leinster, Mr Robt La Touche, Lord Wm Fitzgerald, Mr Christian Fitzsimmons, Mr Hoystead, Mr Toomy, Mr Thomas, Mr E. Grace, Mr Robt Kenny, Mr Andrew Dunne.

This list, as will be seen, includes some names familiar in sport with the Kildare hounds of a later date, but there is a resolution which betrays a distinctly hostile spirit to the Kildare hounds of 1812. At their first meeting on January 12 of that year the Leinster Harriers resolved "That so long as the Kildare Foxhounds hunt the covers in this country, we will not stop any of their earths."

From their minutes I gather that the Leinster Harriers revived the uniform of the old Ponsonby Hunt at Bishops court, which they were expected to wear in the field. The regulation describes this as "Dark blue cloth with a black velvet cape; yellow gilt buttons with 'Leinster Harriers' engraved on them; Buff and Blue striped waistcoat; small buttons same as on the coat." There were arrangements for dining at every Michaelmas Day, New Year's Day, and Easter Tuesday, on the pay or play principle at half a crown a head. It was ordained too "That as soon as one bottle of wine each and a proportionate quantity of punch shall have been drunk, they are to call for the bill, and after that, if more be drank it is to be at the expense of those who choose to remain longer."

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The hunting days were Monday and Thursday in each week, and the hour of throwing off ten o'clock.

For the rest, it was resolved that

Every member of this Hunt do solemnly promise upon his word and honour he will not while a member thereof keep a greyhound, nor suffer one to be kept for him within ten miles of the Kennel where the hounds shall be kept. That he will not shoot nor suffer to be shot for him or otherwise destroyed a hare; that he will not buy one nor suffer one to be bought for him, nor permit anyone whatsoever to course, shoot or otherwise destroy hares on his grounds, but on the contrary will pledge himself to the hunt that he will prosecute at the expense of the hunt any person whatever who shall presume to do so.

The first hare killed on each day was given to one of the two keepers, who were otherwise paid "in proportion to their deserts, which will be best proved by the quantity of game found in their districts"; but any member could bespeak one for himself upon notice given "provided a second is killed." Finally it was resolved "That the collection for the Huntsman do not exceed fifteen pence."

Mr Farrange acted as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, and the Hunt voted him a cup "with

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a suitable inscription " for his services, and, with a note that improvements be made at the Kennel at Grangeton, the official records of the Leinster Harriers come to an end.

From some papers belonging to his ancestor, so kindly lent to me by Sir Anthony Weldon, however, I can trace the existence of the Club for a few years longer. Some draft articles of 1814 suggest that the Leinster Harriers were contemplating the organization of two race meetings, in April and October respectively, with a " Leinster Hunt Challengeable Cup " for one of the prizes for gentlemen riders, and with a Farmers' Plate in addition. I find a receipt for the Cup handed over by Colonel Weldon to Mr J. H. Farrange in April, 1815, but no record of any racing.

By November, 1816, however, the old difficulty of small hunting associations began to declare itself; the Hunt was doubtless beginning to feel the competition of the Kildare Hounds, and letters of the Treasurer to Colonel Weldon disclose the old grievance of arrears of subscription, of members resigning without notice and with arrears due, and of the decline of the fund to a pitiful hundred and twenty-five guineas. Finally, on September 9, 1817, the excellent Treasurer writes to say that " he does not see how the Hunt can continue any longer," and I am afraid that that dismal sen-

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tence records the end of the Leinster Harriers after a career of just five years.

I think we see in Sir Fenton Aylmer's Master-ship the first recognized organization of fox-hunting in Kildare on a quasi-public basis, and that before his time hunting had been conducted by private packs both on the large and small scale, all over Ireland, and particularly in what is now the Kildare country. Such establishments as those at Bishops court and Castletown had always been maintained with much pomp and circumstance—they were indeed the natural expression of the love of sport and of the hospitality which have always been characteristic of the Irish gentleman of large means. But there were many other smaller packs kept by the smaller gentry, whose position, with some distinct differences, was analogous to that of the minor squires and more substantial yeomen of the English shires. These smaller men were also great nurses of the sport in Ireland in its earlier development, and foxhunters of to-day owe them a great debt on that account, if only from the fact that they helped to establish the general popularity of fox-hunting among the country people.

Of these Irish sportsmen, it is more than probable that the Mr Graydon of the original list of 1804 is a type. The Nineteen Mile House on the Kilcullen and Naas Road was long the scene of

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the operations of a sportsman of that name. Here for a fortnight at a time he would come down from Baltiboys with a pack of foxhounds and a party of boon companions and pass the days in hunting the adjacent country, and the nights in the typical Irish revelry of the period. The fame of these doings still lingers about the district. Mr Percy La Touche talked some years since with an old peasant who remembered them. There were hard riding and hard drinking, card playing and cockfighting, even duels were at times included in the delights of these meetings. "Ah," said Mr La Touche's informant, "thim was the times."

Another similar establishment was conducted at Castlewarden by a Mr John Maher. He was the younger son of Mr Gilbert Maher, who was a substantial man in the County Tipperary, and for a time supported John in a life of riot and extravagance at Castlewarden. Here John Maher kept a pack of hounds and enjoyed the other diversions of the squireen of the period, those men who still live in the pages of Charles Lever, where their doings are recorded with little or no exaggeration.

Maher kept a blind piper, who played to his guests after dinner. He also retained a tame artist on the premises, who painted only one subject, a sailor saved from a shipwreck in Dublin Bay and sitting on a rock, and with repeated copies of this

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composition John Maher's favoured intimates were solemnly presented. He had three favourite hounds, Gypsy, Fair Maid and Careless. At proper intervals he would make his huntsman leap over a high gate with a half crown between each knee and the saddle, as a means of keeping him up to his horsemanship. The man was suitably admonished if in the act of leaping he let fall either of the coins.

John Maher ended his life in Naas Gaol, where, as a hopeless debtor, he languished for several years, during which time he had the companionship of Mr George Sidwell, of Drunark, in Co. Tipperary, whose affairs were in a similar unfortunate posture. It was George Sidwell who fought Sir Charles Saxon on behalf of O'Connell, after the Liberator's taste for such encounters had been spoiled by the tragedy at Oughterard Hill. Lord Glengall wished to pay Sidwell's debts, but this kind offer he very honourably refused, as by so doing he considered he would lose his position among those he considered his equals. So he and Maher made the best of their circumstances in Naas Gaol, then under the genial governorship of Captain Woodruff, and spent what little money they could scrape together in sending out for "something" to cheer their drooping spirits.

John Maher's father Gilbert never made any effort to release his ne'er-do-well son. It was a

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distinct saving of money to keep him in Naas Gaol instead of at Castlewarden. But when he died they gave him a noble funeral, and he lies to-day among his forefathers at Templeuhobeg, County Tipperary.

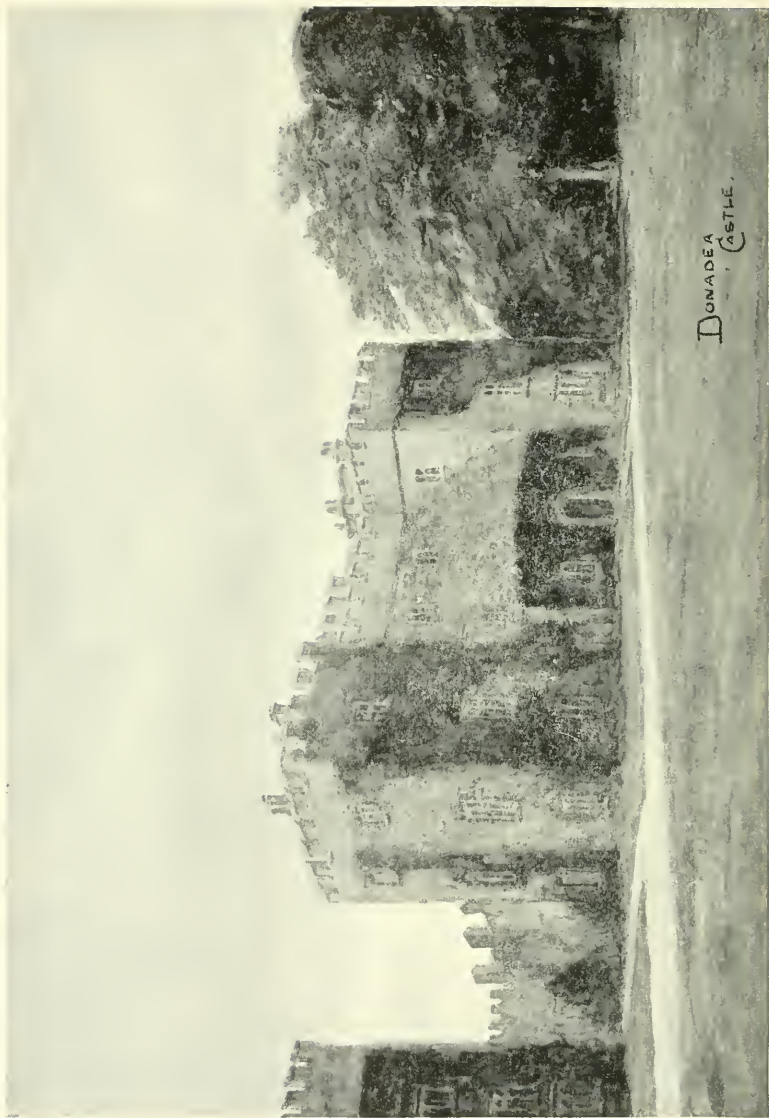
I conclude this chapter with a list of the members elected to the Hunt Club during the masterships of Sir Fenton Aylmer and Mr Arthur Henry.

SIR FENTON AYLMER'S FIRST MASTERSHIP.

Elections.

1804:

Mr Wm Eustace.	Stonebrook.
Revd A. Douglas.	
Capt. Chas Annesley.	Ballysax.
Mr Wm Battenby.	
Mr Wm Graydon.	Killashee.
Mr John Jirwan, Junr.	
Mr Gerald Bagot.	Castle Bagot.
Captn Peter Dundas.	
Mr Joseph Henry.	Straffan.
Capt. S. Rice.	Ballynure.
Mr R. Borrowes.	
Mr M. Wolfe.	Blackhall.
Mr John Mansfield.	Yeomanstown.
Revd A. Hamilton.	
Revd Kildare Borrowes.	
Lt-Col. A. Aylmer.	
Mr John Aylmer.	Whilam.
Mr J. Critchley.	



DONADEA CASTLE.

SIR FENTON ALYMER AND MR A. HENRY

Mr Wm Reeves.	Rosalla.
Mr H. Thompson.	Stonebrook.
Col. the Hon. Prettie.	
Mr John Narney.	
Capt. O'Brien.	Gerards.

1805:

Mr Wm Roper.	
Mr Wm Hume.	
Mr Wm Brownrigg.	
Mr Robt. Hamilton.	N. Cumberland St.

1806:

Lord Rossmore.
Mr J. Farrell.
Mr J. Aylmer, Junr.
Mr Wm Colville, Junr.

1807:

Mr Arthur Henry.
Mr Robt Archbold.
Sir Simon Bradstreet.
Revd Wm Bourne.
Mr James Conolly.
Mr Valentine Maher.

1808:

Mr Joseph Henry.	Lodge Park.
Mr J. Ellis.	Merrion Sqr.
Mr W. H. Carter.	Daly's Club.
Lt-Col Pratt.	The Dare.

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Mr John Abbott.	St Georges North.
Mr Philip Doyne.	Henry St.
Mr Morgan Clifford.	Furnace, Naas.

1809:

Mr J. Kennedy.
Mr Hyngton.
Mr Gerald Dease.
Mr Jas Wall.
Mr Richd Aylmer.
Mr A. Mansfield.

1810:

Mr Robt H. French.	Kildare St.
Mr Wm Whitestone.	Henrietta St.

MR A. HENRY'S MASTERSHIP, JULY, 1810—DECR,
1812.

Elections.

1810:

Mr P. Roache.	Dunore.
Mr W. Mills.	Cradixtown.
Mr W. Davis.	Whilan.
Hon. F. Ponsonby.	
Mr John Cater.	

1811:

The Marquess of Downshire.
The Earl of Mayo.

SIR FENTON AYLMER AND MR A. HENRY

Mr T. Burton Fitzgerald.

Mr Hugh Henry.

Mr H. Bush. New Abbey.

Mr T. St George.

Sir Wm Hort, Bart. Hortland.

Mr Rd Warburton Garryhinch,

Queen's Co.

Mr J. A. Johnson. Ballykillcavan,

Queen's Co.

Mr J. McDonnell. New Hall, Co. Clare.

Mr Chas Rutland.

Mr T. Fitzgerald. Geraldine.

1812:

Mr T. Lowry Allan.

Mr R. Morgan Tighe.

The Duke of Leinster.

Lord Henry Moore.

Lord Killeen.

Lord Wm Fitzgerald.

Revd R. Langrish.

Mr Chas Fitzgerald.

Mr John Conolly.

SIR FENTON AYLMER'S SECOND MASTERSHIP, JAN.,

1813—OCTR, 1814.

Elections.

1813:

Sir Chas Coote, Bart. Queen's Co.

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Mr Walter Mansfield.	Yeomanstown.
Mr W. Dutton Pollard.	Castle Pollard, Co. Meath.
Mr T. Brady.	
Capt. Maginness.	
Mr J. Digby.	Mount Armstrong.
Mr J. Donellan.	Ballydonellan.
Hon. H. Westenra.	

CHAPTER IV

SIR JOHN KENNEDY, 1814-1841

IT is very probable that the terms upon which Mr John Kennedy took the Kildare hounds in October, 1814, afford the first-known example of a country hunted upon a guaranteed subscription. It is probable also that no pack has ever been hunted upon terms so advantageous to the subscribers since subscriptions were guaranteed or collected at all. I shall hope to make abundantly clear in the following pages the efficiency of Mr Kennedy's Mastership, and the quality of the sport he showed in Kildare during no less than twenty-six seasons. Meanwhile, I put upon record the exact words of the resolution offering him the Mastership and of his letter of acceptance.

At a meeting of the Hunt held at Dawson St, Dublin, on May 3, 1814, it was resolved

That the fund arising from the annual five guineas subscription of the whole hunt be in-

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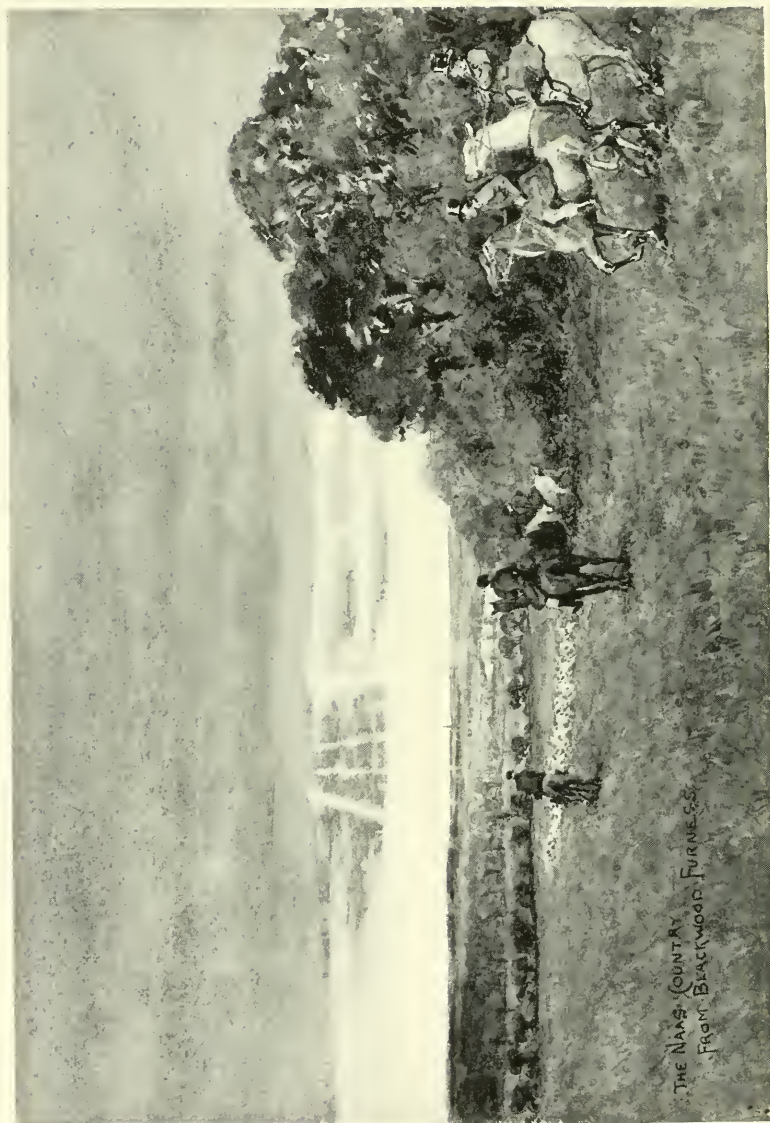
trusted to the care of John Kennedy Esqr; and that the whole and unlimited application of this sum, and the arrangements of the coverts and earthstopping in the Home, Meath and Ballitore countries be vested in him.

There obviously followed a period of consideration for Mr Kennedy did not reply until five months later. But his official acceptance of the Mastership was duly forthcoming in a letter dated October 10, 1814, which I set out at length.

I propose to take the Kildare Hounds and keep them at my own expense provided I am guaranteed the sum of five hundred pounds sterling per annum for the purpose of paying the rents of coverts, earthstoppers, damage to fowls etc. the Hunt undertaking to give me up the country clear of all debts; from the first November next, to the first day of May 1818.

JOHN KENNEDY.

I have referred in the previous chapter to building operations in connexion with a kennel by one Abraham Tyrrell, and although I can find no particulars of the expenditure incurred, I think it highly probable that they were the origin of some little financial difficulty to the Hunt, a fact which gives point to Mr Kennedy's proviso that the



THE NAAS COUNTRY
FROM BLACKWOOD FURNACE.

THE NAAS COUNTRY FROM BLACKWOOD FURNACE.

hounds should come to him "clear of all debts." The gentlemen who met to accept his generous offer took the same opportunity of reviewing the financial position of the Club, and expressed the opinion that "as it appeared to them the club was considerably in debt, to the amount of about £2,400." With Mr Kennedy's offer in view, however, the meeting was further of opinion "that the present subscriptions are fully adequate to the liquidation of the same debt, provided each of the present subscribers continues their subscriptions for three years."

It is very much to the credit of some sixteen members of the Hunt that they at once rose to the occasion and guaranteed the extinction of the debt by their own contributions, thus leaving the ordinary subscription of five guineas to swell Mr Kennedy's annual fund, and enabling him to take over the pack with a clean sheet. I think the names of these public-spirited gentlemen who thus helped to inaugurate the longest and most distinguished Mastership of the Kildare Hunt are worthy of record in its annals.

"We," say those gentlemen, "whose names are hereunto subscribed do bind ourselves to pay annually for three years the subscriptions as annexed to our names on or before the 1st day of January in each year."

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Leinster	£200	0	0
R. La Touche	113	15	0
W. Hort	56	17	6
Fenton Aylmer	113	15	0
Arthur Henry	22	15	0
M. Doyne	22	15	0
John Farrell	28	8	9
Alexr. Mansfield	28	8	9
John Aylmer	17	1	3
John Conolly	17	1	3
R. Archbold	16	12	6
Mayo	27	5	0
Leitrim	50	0	0
Thos Fitzgerald	16	12	6
Col Sherlock	17	1	3
Downshire	115	15	0
	<hr/>		
	£862	3	9
	<hr/>		

That sum accordingly, guaranteed for a period of three years, more than provided for the extinction of a debt of £2,400, and Mr Kennedy was able to carry his generous offer into effect undisturbed by any anxiety as to existing liabilities. I may note that he was assisted by a Committee of Management, composed of Sir Fenton Aylmer, Mr R. La Touche, and Mr Arthur Henry, and that Mr James Annesley became Treasurer in succession to Sir Robt Hort. I may bring to an end these official

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notes which concluded the business upon Mr Kennedy's taking the hounds, by recording the appreciation of the Club of his acceptance of the responsibility of the Mastership on the terms I have set out. "Resolved," says a minute of Oct. 10, 1814, "that the proposal of John Kennedy Esqr. is highly advantageous to the Hunt, and most handsome on his part, and that we cheerfully accept same."

Mr Kennedy was at this time in his twenty-ninth year and at present unmarried, though he had succeeded his father, Mr Edward Kennedy, at Johnstown three years earlier. It is clear that the Hunt was quite as fortunate in the personality of their new Master as in the terms upon which he took the hounds. As I have already indicated, he came of a family of sportsmen long identified with fox-hunting in the Kildare district, and with an intimate knowledge of the country he was called upon to hunt. He is described by one or two members of the Hunt, who still remember him, as one of the greatest sportsmen that Ireland has ever seen. He was a fine horseman, an excellent huntsman, with a splendid voice and a wonderful control over his hounds, whose steadiness was remarkable. The difficulty of controlling large fields had not reached an acute stage at the beginning of his reign, at least, but Mr Kennedy's courteous and hearty

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manners made him a universal favourite with all who followed the Kildare hounds. It is little wonder, therefore, that the provisional period of four seasons during which he undertook to hunt the country was extended again and again, until it eventually stretched to more than a quarter of a century. It is no disparagement to the other able masters who have led Kildare fields, both before his time and since, to accept his title, unquestioned in the Kildare country, of "Father of the Kildare Hunt."

The country which Mr Kennedy took over from Sir Fenton Aylmer was in many respects much then as now. It is, as is well known, on the whole an open country, with very little woodland, and depending almost entirely upon rented gorse coverts for the holding of foxes. As hunting districts were reckoned even in those days, it was extensive, though, of course, it did not compare with those vast tracts in England which went by the name of hunting districts in the early days of the sport, like that of the Berkeley Hounds, for example, which nominally stretched from Bristol to Kensington Gardens, in which pleasance they once killed a fox. But a country extending from Oak Park, near Carlow, on the south, to Loughcrew, in Meath, on the north, a distance as the crow flies of well over forty-five miles, and westward

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from the Wicklow Mountains for another good thirty-five, was obviously one sufficiently extensive for the energies of one Master and one pack of hounds.

The diversity of the country hunted, though adding to the interest of the sport, did not decrease the ordinary difficulties of maintaining a hunting establishment, and of mounting adequately a staff of hunt servants. Though a great part of the Kildare country provided, and provides, some of the best and most extensive stretches of turf in the British Isles, there is great variety of going in other parts of the district. In the north are very wide ditches and small banks as almost the only fences, while in the south, or Thursday country, are high upstanding banks with frequent doubles. In the Athy country also are considerable stretches of arable; great tracts of bog like that of the Bog of Allen intersect and break up some of the good turf going; and in the east is a mountain country rising in places to a height of over three thousand feet, with great wastes of moorland, and breeding a race of stout hill foxes, which at times tax the energies of the hardiest of hounds and horses and the most enthusiastic of riders. In such a country the meets were necessarily far apart from even so central a point as Johnstown, and it was in such a country that Mr John Kennedy undertook to show sport

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for a minimum of five days a fortnight for a guaranteed subscription of £500 a year. In what way he fulfilled the undertaking during twenty-six hunting seasons, I shall hope to show.

It was said that when Mr Kennedy took the hounds there were but eighteen proper coverts in the whole country, and that when he gave up the Mastership there were no less than forty-nine, all in excellent order. The importance of the question of coverts is constantly reflected in the minutes from the earliest pages of the existing book. Apart, indeed, from the inevitable details of the ballots and finance, there was no question which occupied the attention of successive Committees and general meetings of the Hunt so constantly as that of the fox coverts, their acquisition, maintenance and renewal. It would seem from the records of the earlier years that a majority of the then existing gorse coverts were rented from owners or tenants at an average rental of £10 apiece. Others were given rent free by public-spirited members of the Hunt or by sporting farmers in whose holdings they happened to lie, and the minutes are full of appreciation and thanks for individual gifts of this kind. Other resolutions record the result of the deliberations of Committees as to the making of new coverts which involved the acquisition of land, the planting of gorse and considerable

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expenditure on fencing and upkeep until the growth was high enough to hold foxes. Such deliberations often provided the opportunity for some generous member "to take the expense of it on himself." Under Mr Kennedy's management, his personal popularity undoubtedly led to a very gratifying extension of that praiseworthy custom among members. Baron de Robeck has very kindly furnished me with some interesting extracts from a diary of his grandfather, John Michael Fock, Baron de Robeck, who married a Miss Lawless, daughter of the second Lord Cloncurry, and who, though living in Dublin, hunted regularly with the Kildare during the earlier years of Mr Kennedy's Mastership. An entry of October 14, 1820, relates to the old fox covert at Killashee, which we may watch in the making, as it were, in this old diary. "Got on horseback at half past eleven with Kennedy," writes the Baron, "rode to Palmerstown and Morristown to see Mr Mansfield; returned through Naas to the fox covert at Killashee which we inspected." There is a tradition, too, that Mr Cramer Roberts lost his hat in a sudden burst and impulsively offered to make a fox covert on the spot where it should be found, which may, or may not, account for the origin of the covert at Hatfield, near Dunlavin. The Hunt is likewise indebted to two generations of McDonnells for similar gifts. In

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or about 1821 Sir Francis MacDonnell gave continuing permission for the Hunt to draw the Dunfirth coverts, and his son, Mr Francis E. J. MacDonnell made the covert at Colistown, Co. Meath, and presented it to the Hunt. As, however, the covert is situated in Meath, the late Mr Sam Reynell claimed it for his hounds. The late Sir John Power, of Kilfane, acted as arbitrator, and decided that Colistown should go to Meath, but that the Meath Club should make a new covert in Kildare. This has never been done.

I take note of these donations in kind to the Hunt because, as I have said, I think the fact that Mr John Kennedy found the Kildare country with eighteen coverts, and, as Sir John Kennedy, left it a quarter of a century later with all but fifty, speaks very eloquently not only of his energy and good management, but of a popularity which was able to move Kildare sportsmen to such benevolence.

The four seasons during which Mr Kennedy undertook to hunt the country passed without much of note in the Club annals. Such entries as do exist in the minutes point to the appreciation by the members of his excellent organization, an appreciation marked by repeated votes of thanks. Thus in 1816 it was resolved, "That the thanks of the Gentlemen of Kildare and in particular of the Kildare Hunt are most eminently due to Mr

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Kennedy for the manner in which he has supported the hunting of the country, and for the perfection to which he has now brought the hunting establishment, and that the sincere thanks of the Hunt are hereby returned to him."

Another resolution of June 15 of the same year, 1816, directs "that the plate, the property of the Hunt, with the exception of it now at Johnstown, be disposed of to the best advantage," a resolution that one reads to-day with less pleasure. The rather mysterious matter of the kennel building is not made much clearer by an entry of June 15, 1816, asking Mr Kennedy and Mr Thompson to "take the materials of the kennel to dispose of the same in the best manner they can," and the affair is further complicated by a minute of June 23, 1818, accepting an offer of Sir Wm Hort "to take the kennel stables of the Kildare Hunt from the 1st August next to the 1st April 1819 for £20 sterling." It is rather difficult to understand the exact meaning of all these minutes relating to the kennels. It may be, however, that it was felt that new kennels were necessary towards the end of Sir Fenton Aylmer's Mastership; that these were built at a cost of some £2,000; that the sale recorded in the minutes was that of the material of the old kennels, and that the new kennels became vacant and were let to Sir Wm Hort upon Mr Kennedy's

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taking the hounds to his own kennels at Johnstown.

The Club met on November 4, 1817, to consider the arrangements rendered necessary by the approach of the end of Mr Kennedy's first period of Mastership, which would expire on May 1 following, and were much gratified to hear from him that he was willing to continue the hounds on the same terms, the guaranteed subscription of £500 a year. "Resolved," says a minute of that date, "that the thanks of the meeting be given to John Kennedy, Esqr. for the very liberal and gentlemanlike manner in which he has conducted the hunting of this country, and we accept his proposal, which we consider most liberal and in every respect highly advantageous to the hunt provided we can raise a sufficient subscription."

With this laudable object twelve gentlemen present guaranteed some £340, and it was decided to ask each member of the Hunt to become "a subscriber to the establishment." At a further meeting held in January, 1818, it was resolved "that in order to assist the funds of the hunt, the sum of one shilling and eightpence per each day of hunting be collected and added to the earthstopper's fund." How successful all these measures proved in maintaining amicable relations between master, hunt, and farmers is, I think, manifest from the fact that

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there is no further entry in the minute-book during the next five years.

Some remarks in the diary of Baron de Robeck, of which I have made mention, give a vivid idea of the circumstances in which sportsmen contrived to enjoy their sport nearly a century ago. The Baron's usual course was to hunt from Dublin, where he then lived, and as a rule he rode down early to Lyons, where he breakfasted with his father-in-law, Lord Cloncurry, and joined the hounds later. Here, for example, is an entry of October 11, 1821.

"Hunted about the demesne with Kennedy's foxhounds. Rode one of Cloncurry's four year old colts, consequently was not so much at my ease as those who were upon well trained hunters." It has long been a tradition in Kildare that the pioneers of feminine hunting in the country were Mrs Tynte and Mrs Bougatt, but the Baron proves that the prowess of these ladies was anticipated by his wife, thus:

"Jan 5th 1826. Cold sharp wind and every appearance of rain. Went out hunting, and the Baroness on Potigan distinguished herself much."

Again on the 26th of the same month:

"Went out hunting at Downshire. Mary rode very well," and two days later, "Very fine weather; hunted at Stonebrook, Elverstown and Downshire covers, a fatiguing day; Mary out the whole time."

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The same year, 1826, saw the Baron often in the field with the Kildare Hounds, which were later to be so closely associated with the names of his son and grandson. An entry of February 23 is a typical record of an average day of his, in which it will be seen there was no shirking of the rigours then inseparable from fox-hunting for those who did not live near the meets.

“ Got up at 6, although we were not home from the Gradys till 2. Went to breakfast at Lyons, and joined the hounds at Clane. Had very good sport, passing through Bellavilla and near Killibegs to near Landenstown, Castlekeely, Kerdiffstown, Furness and Bishops court. Got back to Dublin by 7 in time to go to a dinner at Sir H. Meredyth’s.”

I may quote also Baron de Robeck’s notes of a week’s hunting in March of the same year.

“ March 4th 1826. Left Dublin at 7 with Hume; breakfasted at Lyons; hunted at Castlebagot and at Coolmine, from whence a fox took us across the Glen of Saggart to Ballinascorney, along the ridge of the Wicklow Mountains. Returned to Dublin to dine with Mr. Baggott.” On the 7th, too, he “ Left Dublin at half-past six and hunted at Killashee, Elverstown and Downshire.” He was out again on the 9th at “ Harbournstown, Harristown, and Ardenode; lunched at Lynch’s and returned to town at half past seven,” when he “ attended Mary to the Drawing Room.” Two days later, on the

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11th, he "Left Dublin at half past six, breakfasted at Blessington and met the hounds at Downshire and had a sharp run to Elverstown; tried Bishopsland and Russborough." This day was softened by a dinner and bed at "Lynch's," but the four days, which, it will be noticed, were all spent in hunting much the same country, strike one as reasonably strenuous.

I may note, before leaving Baron de Robeck's old diary, that there was evidently a private pack of foxhounds kept by Lord Portarlington at Emo in the year 1829. On March 26 of that year the Baron made a note of hunting "with the Emo hounds on the beautiful wooded hills above Stradbally and Ballykilcavan, returned at two o'clock to Stradbally Hall."

Mr Hans Aylmer, of Kerdiffstown, has most kindly placed at my disposal some old papers, among which I find recollections of an officer who hunted in Kildare during the middle period of Sir John Kennedy's long Mastership, which throw a most valuable light on the sport and some of the personalities of that period. These recollections are so interesting that I set them out at length, merely noting that they relate to the seasons about the year 1825.

I now, as a rule, patronized the Kildares, as they hunted in the more immediate vicinity of New-

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bridge. Their country was not so difficult as Meath. There were fewer double hedged ditches. The fences were firm, and consequently more easily dealt with, while the great extent of splendid pasture lands was everything that could be desired both by steed and rider for a gallop over. At that time Sir John Kennedy was the master, a good sportsman who when on a favourite grey, Gamecock, always kept his place at the tail of the pack. He well understood his duties, and always afforded good sport to his supporters.

There were some dashing riders to be found in the Kildares who performed daring feats of horsemanship which were appalling. Robin Aylmer of Painstown, a then celebrated sportsman, was generally well mounted on a thoroughbred brown stallion called *Ranunculus*, a marvellous fencer, whose good qualities, however, were marred by a most diabolical temper. He was always led out twitched to enable his master to mount, who when once in the saddle was obliged to remain there at the peril of his life until similar precautions were taken on his return home to enable him to alight, for so great was the antipathy of the brute towards his master, that he invariably attempted to attack him with the most savage ferocity whenever he had a chance.

It was then the custom of the members of the hunt to test the quality of the officers of every newly arrived regiment, and as a matter of course one of the —th had to go through this ordeal. The fields

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were never inconveniently large, for at the time few of the farmers or shopkeepers ever followed hounds, and the crowding and difficulty in getting off, which the real sportsmen now encounter in this country when the meets are held in the vicinity of large manufacturing towns where everybody who possesses a horse turns out to exhibit himself as a fox-hunter without having the slightest knowledge of sport, were never experienced. For this reason the Kildare fields were select, and for the most part composed of men who knew what they were about, and how to do it.

For a fortnight after our arrival to give us time to get our horses into condition the Kildares met at the covert nearest the barracks, and the officers, myself among the number, all well mounted, rode out with a firm determination of proving their metal. It was easy to see when we reached the covert side, that our pluck was about to be put to the test. Some thirty redcoats on splendid weight carriers were assembled to meet us, surrounded by peasants who seemed in a perfect state of excitement as to the trial of horsemanship, which they knew must take place between their popular squires and the military strangers. Our turnout seemed to make a favourable impression, and a strange sort of fellow called Sugu, whose acquaintance we afterwards cultivated to his great advantage, made a minute survey of our nags and appointments, and then delivered his opinion of our merits to the bystanders. He wore an old red coat,

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a battered hat, and was without shoes or stockings or necktie, to give freedom of motion. He deserved his sobriquet, which translated means "muddled," from the fact that he was never stupidly drunk or actually sober. He knew the country so well, and was so speedy of foot that he managed to be up at every check and always in at the death.

The fox broke in the midst of a well maintained silence, and the hounds burst from the covert with a crash of music which electrified both men and horses. Amongst the local gentlemen was Robin Aylmer, and having heard so much about himself and his steed I determined to attach myself to him as a safe guide in an unknown country, and also with the full intention of trying to equal if not to rival him if I could. The pack was allowed to settle to their game before a man stirred, and then, the master and whips taking the lead, we followed.

We had a fine run with occasional slow hunting, which was not only agreeable both to men and horses as it enabled them to recover their wind, but afforded an opportunity of appreciating the merits of the hounds, which can never be fairly estimated when they are sailing away in full cry on a burning scent. Aylmer rode as close to the pack as propriety permitted, and he no sooner remarked that I continued to follow in his wake and evinced a determination to stick to his skirts, than he tried to bring me to grief by leading me into difficulties. He took the largest fences when he might quite as well have kept his ground by taking smaller ones,

and after getting over invariably looked back to watch my proceedings. When unable to pound me he evidently appeared disappointed, but still continued his reckless riding without being able to shake me off. The chase was so long that the great bulk of those present at the break were already disposed of. Aylmer, one of the whips and myself only were well up, when we came suddenly in view of a canal as wide as a river which lay before us. The fox first took the soil, the hounds following him in full cry when Aylmer turned in his saddle, and crying to me, "Now then for it," dashed to my horror at a lock which was just before him. The horse started from a platform of roughly chiselled flag, and landed safely on the other side on similar footing. A crowd of peasants gave a cheer and wished long life to his honour, and I, having pulled my horse off, stood in mute astonishment, when Sugu rushing by shouted "Bravo master Robin, the divil himself couldn't bate you" and then running over a board which afforded passage to foot people, he waved his corbeen round his head, and politely wished me good morning.

I have since then hunted much in various countries, and never have I seen any man attempt to take such a jump as Aylmer rode over that day. The empty lock was twenty-two measured feet in the clear and thirty feet in depth, and lined all through with granite, and had the horse failed in covering it, inevitable death must have been the fate of both steed and rider. A bridge concealed by a plantation

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was close at hand, and passing over it the whip and I arrived just as Aylmer had secured the brush in the headstall of his saddle. He rode up to me for he durst not alight, and shaking me cordially by the hand, complimented me on my pluck and said jocosely "that when I had become accustomed to canal locks he was sure they would not stop me."

The following morning Sugu made a personal visit to the barracks to compliment us on our conduct in the field and from him we learned that although I bore away the palm, the deserts of every one of my brother officers present were duly recognized. He assured me that we had won the good opinion, not only of the gentlemen but of the people, and that we might depend on being protected from harm and hospitably entertained, an assurance which was afterwards fully realized during our stay in the country.

Although there was then almost always a follower of Sugu's description similarly rigged out attached to every Irish pack of hounds, he was unquestionably the most witty rascal and most devoted sportsman of the genus that it was my good fortune to come in contact with. A story was related of him by a gentleman who dined at our mess, and the incident, well known to be true, is calculated to give an idea of the passion for sport and the risks he was prepared to run for the purpose of witnessing and applauding some daring stroke of horsemanship. There is a celebrated water jump called the "Lock

of the Bay " in the Kildare country, and whenever the wind indicated that the fox was likely to run in that direction which would necessitate it being crossed at the only place it was negotiable Sugu always took care to be present at the performance. The more accurately to witness the prowess of both horse and riders, he was accustomed to lie on his back on a dry spot under the bank on the side from which it was taken, applauding each rider that passed over him as their conduct seemed to merit. Being so located on the occasion alluded to, Sir John Kennedy came first, when Sugu exclaimed, " Well done your honour." The redoubted Aylmer followed when he cried, " Master Robin, you're the prize boy." But the dashing Surgeon General Crampton, afterwards Sir Philip, coming at the same moment with a rush and passing Aylmer in their flight, Sugu sprang to his feet overcome with enthusiasm and shouted at the top of his voice. " Nothing can beat you me bould Phil; that I may never die till ye take a leg off me."

Both the Meath and Kildare hounds sometimes went beyond bounds and took up their quarters in an outlying town. There was on such occasions an ordinary, but the proceedings were of a very commonplace description, and it was curious to hear the contemptuous manner in which they were spoken of by the old hangers on of the hotel who related with raptures and regret the glories of past times " when gentlemen acted as such, and if they happened to break a head in their jollifications

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were sure to repay liberally for their amusement.”

One of the many obligations laid upon the Kildare Hunt by Mr John Kennedy, and one which I personally appreciate very highly, was the keeping of a record of every day's sport during the many years of his Mastership. This is a record which for continuity and completeness is, I should imagine, rare among the annals of fox-hunting. The present Sir John Kennedy has most kindly placed at my disposal the hunting diary of his grandfather, which begins on October 15, 1815, and continues without the omission of a day until February in 1839. It consists of a hundred and one folios of closely written MS., in which one may learn the coverts drawn, the foxes found, and those killed during twenty-four seasons, together with accurate though brief particulars of every run of the hounds throughout those seasons. Here, then, is a record from which at the proper moment I can give present members of the Hunt a résumé of the sport enjoyed by their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, the number of days they hunted, the blank days they experienced and the proportion of kills to finds during a quarter of a century. I shall also be able to tell them how Mr Kennedy was supported by the contributions of

sportsmen in the field, for at the end of every day's hunting he made a careful entry of the cap money forthcoming during that day. On looking into this diary for the day's hunting mentioned by Baron de Robeck, when a hill fox took the hunt along the ridge of the Wicklow Mountains, I find Mr Kennedy's laconic entry of the same run, " Found at Coolmine," and as there is no record of a kill I know that the long run across the Glen of Saggart to Ballinascorney, and so along the hills, ended in the escape of the fox.

Mr Kennedy's diary obviously lends itself to analysis rather than to quotation, but a few of his notes during the earlier years of his long reign will not be out of place here. I find that when uninterrupted by snow or frost the hunting days averaged from ten to twelve in the month, and there was evidently no lack of foxes from the beginning. In the first month of these annals, that of October, 1815, they found twenty-two foxes on nine hunting days, of which they killed six. " Hounds well tired, but behaved well," is a remark on the 12th, a day when he had found twice at Ballina, ran to Garinshin, changed there, " but after good hunting too many foxes, found at Ballindowlan, ran him through the demesne, but lost from want of scent." Again, on the 16th, " Did not kill, from the number of foxes found at Killibegs." Here is a

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brief account of a run in the hill country on November 6: "Found at Rusborrow in the turnips, ran well to Woolfstown, found a fresh fox ran by Blessington, rocked beyond Kilbride. Very good sport." It will be seen that Mr Kennedy did not waste words on any raptures in recording his sport. Here is another entry of what was obviously an exceptional day:

"10th. Jan. 1816. Found Slate Quarries; the best run I ever saw, earthed in Stonebrook."

This diary, then, brief as its particulars are, is of the greatest value to me in my attempt to reconstruct this great but vanished period of the Kildare Hunt, and I am additionally fortunate in the great help afforded to me by the only surviving son of Sir John Kennedy, Mr Robert Kennedy of Baronrath, whose many friends are delighted to see him hale and hearty, and with a perfect memory of those distant days of Kildare sport.

Mr John Kennedy always hunted the hounds himself, and his two whips, James Byrke and Martin Guirke lived in the house at Johnstown. Mr Kennedy himself kept four horses, with which he managed to hunt five days a fortnight season after season, and each whip had three. Mr Robert Kennedy distinctly remembers seeing the whips at their breakfast in the servants' hall on hunting mornings, that breakfast consisting of a pot of

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potatoes, any quantity of butter, and a large jug of new milk. This temperate fare did not prevent the whips from getting all the liquor of another kind they could find; they were indeed a notoriously thirsty pair. For one week during every month the hounds were taken to Bunlbo Hall, near Grangecon, and met each day at Ballintore Inn, where the whips were lodged. On one particular evening the men, after a heavy supper and deep potations, were got with difficulty to their bed, where they slept together, and were soon in a drunken slumber. It then occurred to some humorist at the inn to connect each man's great toe to that of his bed-fellow with a piece of wire, the wire in turn being tied to a line of whipcord passed through the keyhole of the door. A sharp tug on this string woke the men, and each feeling a torturing pain in his great toe, which was increased at every movement of his companion, attributed the cause to the other, and the pair fell into a furious encounter and were so mauled before they were parted that neither could appear during that week at the meets.

Mr Robert Kennedy's valuable recollections enable me to record some pleasing vignettes of his father, and of life at Johnstown during the earlier years of his long reign as Master. The old Irish custom of hard drinking at table was never in vogue during Mr Kennedy's time; excess was never

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seen, nor would it have been tolerated for a moment at his table. It was the Master's invariable custom, no matter how late, to see his hounds fed after each day's hunting, and Mr Robert Kennedy well remembers as a child hearing a good deal of grumbling at that excellent custom, especially on the part of the ladies. During the hunting season the Master would never allow the hounds flesh of any sort, not even in the attenuated shape of broth or soup. He firmly believed that it vitiated their powers of scent, and their diet was confined from September to April at least to the best old oaten meal boiled in new milk in any quantity necessary, as a large dairy at Johnstown was at the disposal of the kennels.

Mr Kennedy held gambling in equal abhorrence with intemperance, and card playing for money was strictly forbidden at his house. Mr Robert Kennedy, however, remembers a surreptitious game in which Mr Cecil Lawless and Mr St George Foley were engaged and which resulted in a loss to the latter which at that time seemed very considerable to young Robert, who as a boy was watching the game. He probably expressed some opinion in the matter, for his elder brothers at once impressed him, with dire threats, with the advisability of holding his tongue. They said, in fact, they would " make Tom Kelly of him " if he

dared to say a word. The phrase still current in the county and its origin are so typical of the Ireland of a bygone day that they seem worthy of being put on record. Tom Kelly was a hunting man of renown, who lived in the Athy district, and used often to tell of his experience at Portarlinton School, where he acquired such learning as he possessed. He appears to have been the whipping boy of that establishment. Whenever any little misunderstanding arose between the master and the assembled school, and the former was unable, after the customary inquiry, to identify the culprit, he would strike the desk fiercely with his cane and exclaim in a voice of thunder, "No one's done it, of course, but step up, Tom Kelly; I can cut the backside off Tom Kelly, any way."

Mr John Kennedy was a disciplinarian, but perfectly just and even tempered, and his son remembers being chastised once only. The master always read prayers of a morning, even on hunting days, when hounds met near. On one of these occasions young Robert was looking out of the window instead of following his devotions, on the watch for the whips going to the stable. His interest in sport caused him to forget himself so far as to say, "There goes Martin," when he felt himself knocked off his feet by the heavy prayer-book which his father threw at his head.

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Another chastisement was of a different character, and might almost pass as a caress. Mr Kennedy "blooded" his son by striking him across the face with half a fox which had been killed in a stick-heap at Johnstown after a brilliant gallop. Young Robert, still only a child, saw the death, his hand in that of a stableman. The first two men up were Colonel King, who had lost an arm at Waterloo, and was then commanding the artillery at Dublin, and Dick Magennis, a hard riding sportsman, who also lacked an arm. "Begorrah," exclaimed the stableman to the boy, "there's only cripples up."

A little later, when Mr Robert Kennedy was still a young boy, there was a famous big fox near Johnstown, which gave long ringing runs, often ending near the kennels, and could never be accounted for. One day he ran into the yard, and the Master thought he had got into a large stick-heap, stacked quite close to the kennels. Young Robert was present with his terriers, and was duly admonished by his father to keep away. When the hounds had been drawn off, after an unsuccessful examination of the stick-heap young Kennedy, concealing his design, asked a stableman to come with him into the kennel "to look for rats." On taking his dogs into the "close kennel," used then as a hospital for sick or lame hounds, the terriers' bristles rose, and they bolted the fox, which

jumped out on to the lean-to roof, ran along the wall, and so gained the garden. Here the terriers took up the hot scent, and found the fox's way out, up a cherry tree in the corner.

With Sir John Kennedy's diary before me, with its record of the plenty of foxes found and killed during twenty-four years, it is strange to hear of a difficulty of preserving. But such was the case during the early years of his Mastership. Mr Robert Kennedy well remembers the cause, and also the means adopted by his father for effecting a cure. Fox poaching was then a recognized profession, made quite profitable in the Kildare country by a ready market provided close at hand by the Ward Union Hounds, and by a certain Dr Gregory, who kept a pack of harriers and a private lunatic asylum near Dublin. Mr John Kennedy decided to act upon the sound maxim that a converted poacher makes the best gamekeeper. The *doyen* of the fox-stealing profession in the Kildare country was one Dennis Garvin, whose central office was situated at Ballymore Eustace, but whose agencies and operations extended far from that spot. This worthy Mr Kennedy enlisted as his chief earth warner, an office which he held with distinction during the Master's long reign and those of three successive Masters, and fox stealing ceased in the Kildare country as if by magic.

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Mr Robert Kennedy has a vivid recollection of a certain meet at Newtown Mill, then a crack fixture with the Kildare, when his father, seeing him attended by a groom, suggested that the boy was afraid to ride by himself, a remark very likely to remain long in the memory of its victim. Furness was then always drawn by taking the hounds through the wooden door at the top of the hill. As Mr Kennedy passed through this with the pack, he exchanged greetings with Drummond, the Dublin bootmaker, whose wares were so popular among the gentry that he died worth a large fortune, which he very piously devoted to the foundation in Dublin of the existing Drummond Institute for the Orphans of Soldiers. "A fine morning, Drummond," remarked Mr Kennedy. "It is, sir," replied Drummond, "and a grand sight, for sixty-seven pair o' my boots has already passed through that door."

Mr Robert Kennedy is of opinion that the best riders during his father's time were Mr Henry Carroll, of Ballinure, and Mr Edward Beauman of Furness. Mr Carroll was a brilliant horseman, raced at his fences, but rarely got to the end. Mr Beauman, on the contrary, took his fences slowly, but was always there. The two best welter weights of the same period were the late Lord Cloncurry and Mr Albemarle Cator, whose property was

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situated in Norfolk, but who married a Galway lady, Miss Blakeney, and hunted for many years in Kildare. Mr Cator always had superb horses, rode fully seventeen stone, and it was held an almost terrifying sight to see him and Mr E. Lawless, afterwards Lord Cloncurry, ride against each other. The last-named gentleman was held as one of the best welter weights who ever rode in Kildare. He, too, rode over seventeen stone, but was very hard to catch. He was an enthusiastic supporter of hunting and went to a great expense in coping the extensive walls round Lyons, in order to prevent foxes getting in, as he declared he would rather lose his right hand than have a fox killed by his keepers. After coping the walls, he made a good fox covert outside the demesne.

Other very hard riders were Mr Carter of Castle-martin and Mr Medlicott of Dunmurrey. The gentleman last named, indeed, was accustomed to fix his eyes on the hounds and look at nothing else, and was once seen to take a thick high hedge within a few perches of an open gate.

The list of the earlier elected members of the Hunt contains other names which call for a passing mention at least. Lord Rossmore of the list was the second Baron, and I think it highly probable that as a young man he kept hounds himself, as he is the principal figure in two very fine paintings belong-

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ing to the Earl of Huntingdon, who has most kindly allowed me to reproduce them. But he hunted regularly with the Kildares for many years, and one story of him survives. He got safely over a very formidable fence, at which the huntsman hesitated. The man called out, "What's on that side, my lord?" "I am," said Lord Rossmore.

Mr T. H. Royce, elected in 1815, was the father of the late Mr John Royce. The fine estate of this family in Co. Limerick was sold after the disastrous year of the famine. Mr Peter Purcell of Halvers-town was perhaps, next to Daniel O'Connell, one of the best-known men in Ireland. He was a stage coach proprietor on a large scale. There is a verse, not without a tincture of Irish humour, which describes some of the towns of that era as they appeared to the traveller by coach.

Longford is a dirty hole;
On Boyle I lave me curse;
Athlone is the divil's place,
And Mullingar is worse.
One and all it makes no odds
They're all so very bad,
But, d—n me if I ever see
The likes of Kinnegad.

Mr Purcell was also a great agriculturist and the founder of the Agricultural Society of Ireland. He

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was a cousin of Sir John Kennedy and a great supporter of hunting. He made two coverts at Halvers-town and presented them to the Hunt. Mr Peter Purcell Gilpin is his grandson.

Mr C. E. Kennedy of Kilbride, who lived later at Peamount, was Sir John Kennedy's brother. He made the famous covert at that place, afterwards remade by Sir Edward Kennedy, the second Baronet, his nephew. Mr C. E. Kennedy was a member of the Hunt Club, although he did not himself ride to hounds. Mr Marmaduke Cramer Roberts, elected in 1819, was the great-grandfather of the present owner of Sallymount, and a great supporter of hunting. Mr Robert Bourke, elected in 1819, recalls the stormy days of Catholic Emancipation. He contested the county after the carrying of that measure, but was defeated by Richard More O'Ferrall, after a very bitter contest. Mr W. Brownrigg was Secretary of the Hunt during Sir Fenton Aylmer's time. Mr John Farrell of Moy-nalty, Co. Meath, was a prominent member of the Hunt, who lived at McEvoy's Hotel, Naas, for the season, and hunted for many years with the Kildares. He told Major Aylmer, who told me, that he was there as early as Sir Fenton Aylmer's Mastership, and he is credited by tradition with having made Eadestown covert. Mr Robert Archbold of Davids-town, Co. Kildare, was M.P. for the county, and

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first introduced shorthorn cattle into the country. Mr Alexander Kirkpatrick was a great rider and prominent sportsman with a great knowledge of the breeding of horses. He was a leading member of the Hunt, and generally rode thoroughbreds.

Finally there is Captain Sheddon of Dublin, a gentleman well known in Kildare sport of those days for the strength of his language and the mildness of his riding.

Mr Medlicott, the present owner of Dunmurrey, is another veteran of the Kildare Hunt, whose recollections extend well back into the Mastership of Sir John Kennedy, and has been kind enough to tell me much of interest about that famous period. When Sir John came over into that country, which was regularly the case, the meet always took place at the door of Dunmurrey Hall. The hounds, indeed, were often sent over the night before and kennelled in the stables. These buildings were sometimes used by the workmen, who lit fires, baked potatoes, and ate their meals there. On one of these visits by the Hunt, about the year 1834, the hounds had been turned into the stable, as usual, and early in the morning it was found that the building was on fire. It was thought that the hounds scratching among the ashes for potato skins had thrown out the embers on to their bedding straw and so started the fire. It was

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found impossible to open the door, which swung inwards, as the hounds were all huddled against it, and it was cut through with axes. The hounds then rushed out and raced into the lake, a few hundred yards away. None were killed in the fire, but it was found that the heat and smoke had destroyed their sense of smell and the dog hounds were ruined. The bitches therefore were alone kept, as useful only for breeding.

Sir John once found a litter of light-coloured cubs at Dunmurrey. "Oh," said he to Mr Medlicott, "they are never of any use when they are of that colour. I must kill them all. What day will be convenient?" A day was fixed, and he brought his hounds over on the quiet and killed the whole litter in one day.

An anecdote which that fine sportsman, Mr Robert Watson, was very fond of telling and which relates to the Kennedy régime is worth preservation. When his father, Mr John Watson, was a boy, he used to hunt during the holidays with a pack belonging to Sir Richard Butler of Garryhundon, Co. Carlow. Young Watson was once returning to school in Dublin on horseback, attended by a manservant, when he met the Kildare hounds hunting a fox. They had checked, but young Watson called out, "Jostler has it." Mr Kennedy rode up, looking very impressive in his tall silk hat, which he

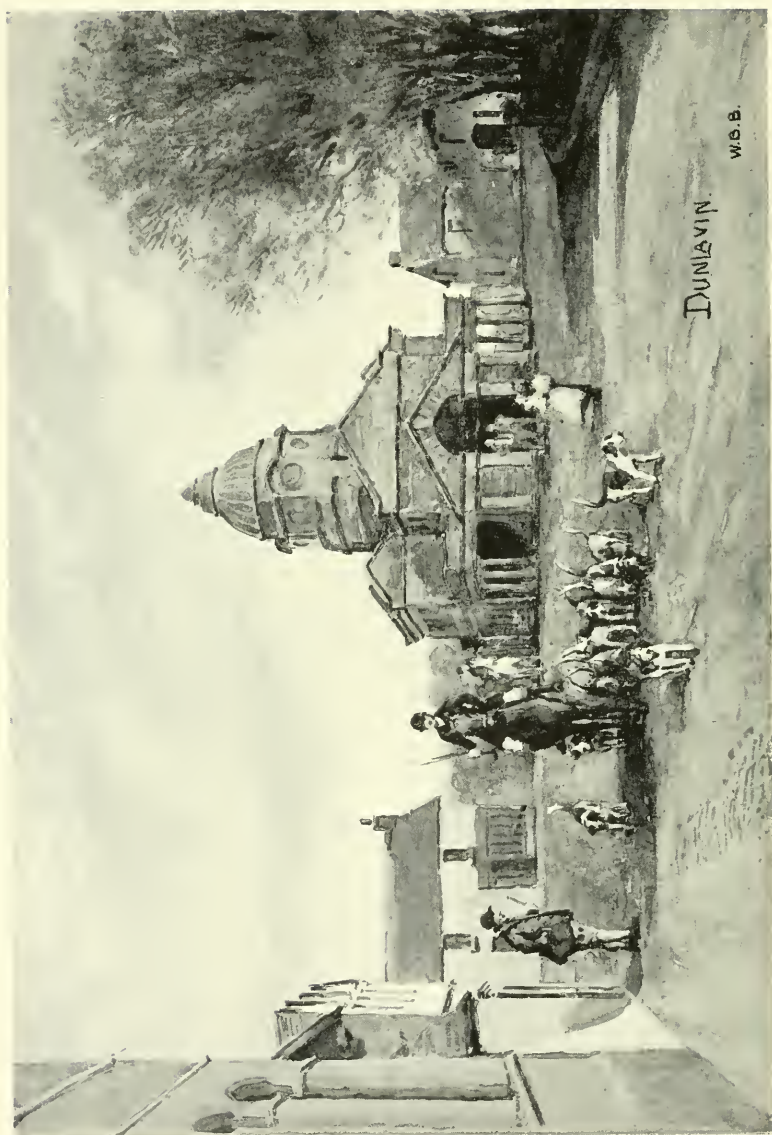
HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

always wore, and said to the boy, " Who are you, and what do you know about Jostler? " " I'm John Watson," replied the boy, " and that's Sir Richard Butler's Jostler, wherever you got him." Such was the beginning of a great friendship between the two families of Watson and Kennedy.

One more story of the period has reached me. Old Mr Wall of Knockrigg used often to praise the sport shown by Mr Kennedy, and to illustrate the length of the runs would say that he often put on a new pair of breeches in the morning and they had to be darned in the evening.

All Kildare men congratulated Mr John Kennedy in July of 1836 when King William IV created him a baronet. It remains for me now to give some facts from Sir John's diary, already mentioned, which will, I think, speak very eloquently of the sport he provided during twenty-six seasons, the diary itself covering twenty-four of those seasons.

I find that in those twenty-four winters the hounds actually ran on 1,240 days, in which they found 2,734 foxes, of which they killed 859. There was thus an average of two finds a day, with three finds on every fifth day, during a quarter of a century. Those fond of statistics will note that the proportion of foxes killed to those found gives an average of one to three and one-fifth; in other



DUNLAVIN.

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words, the odds on the fox in a sporting country like the Kildare with a well-bred pack of hounds was during the first half of the nineteenth century precisely sixteen to five.

The number of blank days, mostly described by the Master as "very wet," was forty-three out of twelve hundred and forty, or one in twenty-nine days on average. The largest number of blank days was in 1832. 1823, 1824, 1828 and 1831 had four each. Six other seasons had two only in each; eight other seasons had one blank only, and the years 1815, 1817, 1820, 1834 and 1837 had no blanks at all. I close this old diary of Sir John Kennedy with the conviction that it is the record of a very remarkable era of sport which it would be difficult to excel in any Hunt of the three kingdoms. I may add finally that the poultry fund was collected in the field, and was highest in 1825 with £199 2s. 4d., lowest in 1828 with £90 7s., and had an average over fourteen years of £156.

In attaining the excellence of establishment and organization which distinguished his Mastership, there is no doubt that Sir John Kennedy was compelled to make great calls upon his private means. He was continually adding to the many coverts, which at length converted the Kildare country into the finest in the island, and a meeting of 1826 disclosed the manifest fact that the £600, which

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then represented the subscriptions and field money, was, as a minute puts on record, "a sum totally inadequate to pay the expense of the country and keep the establishment in such a manner as to give satisfaction." It was resolved, therefore, to raise the total to a minimum of £800, to enable the Master "to keep thirty couple of hunting hounds and nine horses for himself and two whippers in." A hundred pounds a year was also subscribed by fourteen gentlemen present in addition to their ordinary subscriptions. A week later thirteen other gentlemen guaranteed five guineas each, or such proportion of that sum as should be necessary to balance the account at the end of the season. It may be assumed that these steps proved adequate for the moment at least, for the Hunt was for the next five years in the happy posture of those communities which have no history.

On March 1, however, of 1830 a meeting at McEvoy's Hotel, Naas, recited the old difficulty, and incidentally hinted that the Master had doubts as to his ability to continue the hounds. The proceedings began with another very flattering vote of thanks to Mr Kennedy for his "superior judgment and unremitting zeal in managing the country, making coverts, and in hunting the hounds for sixteen years, for the excellent sport afforded during that period, and for the universal

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hospitality and urbanity of manner by which he had at all times been pre-eminently distinguished." The resolution ended with an earnest request to Mr Kennedy to keep the hounds. The difficulty was the old question of expenses, and Mr Kennedy replied that he had no wish to relinquish the Mastership, but that the sum of £800 previously agreed upon was the minimum upon which he could hunt the country properly, and that he could continue so long only as that sum was forthcoming. A vote of thanks to Mr Robert La Touche for his "liberal subscription of £100 a year" places upon record the help given by one generous member of the Hunt at a time of difficulty. A meeting of a month later discloses the fact that the difficulty was surmounted and that Mr Kennedy continued his beneficent rule.

It may be safely assumed that this satisfactory state of things continued for the eleven years through which Mr Kennedy was still to lead the Hunt. On March 1, 1837, members of the Hunt gave a dinner at Fenning's Hotel, Sackville Street, at which they presented him with a fine piece of plate as some acknowledgment of what Kildare sportsmen owed to their master. There is an entry in Baron de Robeck's diary under that date, which gives a glance, though a brief one, at this obviously convivial occasion.

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“Dinner at Fenning’s Hotel, Sackville Street, given by members of the Kildare Hunt to Sir John Kennedy on presenting him with a splendid piece of plate. Leinster and about twenty-five Kildare men were present. Henry Carter was in the chair. I got home with the assistance of David C. La Touche.”

The last records of 1838 contain no mention of any business save that of the ballot, and it is a matter of history in Kildare that Sir John’s long reign ended only in 1841, when he at length yielded the horn to Mr John La Touche after perhaps the longest and certainly one of the most successful reigns in the annals of the sport.

I may conclude this chapter with one of those metrical accounts of a day’s hunting which are common in most hunting districts. It at least preserves for us some of the names of the sportsmen of 1825 in Kildare, and their performance in the field as it appeared to some enthusiastic fellow sportsman.

The verses were written in the margins of a copy of Beckford’s *Thoughts on Hunting*, apparently the property of Mr William Brownrigg of Ardinode, whose name, with the date 1819, appears on the front page. They were very kindly copied out for me by the present owner of the volume, Mr J. Whiteside Dane, our indefatigable honorary secretary.

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ON A REMARKABLY GOOD DAY'S SPORT
WITH THE KILDARE HOUNDS,
JAN. 1825.

Assist me I pray you ye Gods of the Chase,
To sing how the Hounds of Kildare go the pace,
They Hunt well, they run well, tho' some say
they're slow,
They've speed for the best, as the horses must
know,
To try Castlemartin one morning they came,
This Cover not yet has established its fame,
But 'twill soon, for it's kept from encroaching,
And the owner keeps diggers from poaching,
So for drawing it blank we cared not a rush,
From Ballysax hoping we'd soon view his brush,
But Alas, we looked blue, when we came to the
ground,
For the devil a fox was there to be found,
No smiles could be seen, and the rain it came down,
As we splashed through the Country for Halvers-
town,
Most thought it a case, and some said that the day
Was so bad, if we found it the scent would not lay,
But all in good time we arrived at the Cover,
And for the present our Chaffing was over,
Now, need I describe the joy in all faces?
For surely they're all alike in such cases,
When the fox was seen daringly breaking away,
And the hounds at his brush were making sharp play,

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

But these moments of joy were soon on the wane,
He proved a rank Coward and turned back again,
Some time having trotted and jostled about,
When the patience of all were like to wear out,
And just as the Stoutest began to despair,
The Gallantest Fox ever found in Kildare,
Was unkennelled and scorning a Shelter to take,
From Garden or spinny, from bramble or brake,
Went off in fierce style, across meadow and ditch,
Right close at his heels every son of a b——h,
Now to get a good start each swell did his best,
Most righteously saying Old Nick take the rest,
For three miles they went like the devils in hell,
As those who were with them can verily tell,
When two minutes check near the flat of Grangebegg,
Showed some in the bottoms had left a hind leg,
Little time was enjoyed here to quiz and to hoax,
For to Harristown Park away went the fox,
And after him chevied both horses and men,
Perhaps such a tickler we'll ne'er see again,
But here all our efforts to touch him were vain,
For despight of our teeth he reached the demesne,
Where tho' the hounds pressed him he cared not a
pin,
And altho' nearly busting, he would not give in,
But gallantly strove the broad Liffey to cross,
And succeeding he sunk quite beat in the Gorse,
Which grew on the bank where he lay in the shade,
Not deeming his foes this retreat would invade,
But the hounds dashing in soon ended the strife,
This fine sporting fellow here yielded his life,

SIR JOHN KENNEDY, 1814-1841

Now Reynard being dead it's time for my song,
To say a few words of the galloping throng,
Who followed this pack so steady and fleet,
How beat, some they went well, and how some they
were beat,

John Kennedy mounted upon his Brown mare,
Kept well with his hounds, for he always rides fair,
Did not cut a dash, but the truth it must out,
He always is there, and is seldom thrown out.
Of Standen on Broadhead, we'll say but one
word,

'Tis enough that he rode as straight as a bird,
And Williams was carried right merrily through,
Tho' when near the end he was spurring a few,
Neither Carter, or Roberts, were ever seen baulking,
We *all* do our best, so what argufies talking?
Now Brownrigg, and Cannon who rode his stout
black,

Through all his fine scamper were close to the pack,
George Anson was there too and young Brabazon,
Who shov'd well along on his fiery dun,
And Johnny the Whipper the choicest of lads,
Went the pace, for he mounted the best of his pads
But this is no news, for all must allow,
He crams *some* along, God only knows how,
Peggy Fane on old Sting-Tail, ne'er before rode so
well,

I could swear on my oath it's no falsehood I tell,
Both Ogle and Lawry, tho' thrown out at first,
Cut in very soon and saw most of the burst,
Chal on the Chestnut, Jack on his Brown Horse,

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

You can find but few better, a great many worse,
Poor Purcell, who though he does *not* funk the
fences,
Is seldom in view when the running commences,
To the end of this day did he manage to crawl,
How he *did it*, to us it is nothing at all,
Many others there were in this hard clipping fun,
For Blane Pratty and Allet and Shore saw the run,
And some others who now may escape recollection,
(Pray take it as no personal reflection)
Taking leave now of those whom fortune be-
friended
In this hunting bout so nobly contended,
We must not forget those most woeful disasters,
Which befel some poor nags, and their doubly poor
Masters,
Charles Makepeace on Spinctum went well for a
bit,
Till running through Grangebeg he made a wrong
hit,
Hutton's horse, which as yet was ne'er known to tire,
In crossing the *bottoms*, stuck fast in the mire,
How provoking a case, I wish that the Devil
Would take all the bogs, they are oft so uncivil,
But let us not quiz an unlucky frater,
Misfortunes may catch us all sooner or later,
Corkram and Malloy in troubles were caught,
They were thrown out at first, and saw none of the
sport,
Poor Phipps, at the Covert-side got a sad fall,
In leaping his mare on a heavy stone wall,

SIR JOHN KENNEDY, 1814-1841

Still, this was not the worst, for her frame was so
shook,

She could not strike a trot by hook or by crook,
One Covey, when riding slap dash at a gate,
That was open and iron, also met a sad fate,
For hanging quite loosely, it swung on the hinge
And thus caught by the leg, his nag got a twinge,
And Standen as onward he powdered away,
Grappl'd fast by a bough, his hat went astray,
Not stopping to catch it, he rode home without,
A Comforter tied his cold temples about,
And the flap hanging down when seen from afar,
He looked, by my soul, as a German Hussar,
Little Vaughan on the Grey, rode forward enough,
But being too fat at last wanted the Puff,
That wags cannot go when out of condition,
Is as sure as that sinners must go to perdition,
And Harford, though mounted far better than
most,

That he went this run well, at least does not boast,
Many others also were most thoroughly dish'd
Who cannot say they went as straight as they
wished,

The Sport being over we all trotted home,
When to meet good Squire Brownrigg so lucky
were some,

For he led us away to his fine friendly hall,
Just recently nicknamed the Hole in the Wall,
And there we all drank of good Whiskey and
Brandy,

And most happy were we to find it so handy,

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

And off we went back not minding the weather,
And pleasantly talked as we rode on together,
Of the Joys of the Chase, its frolic and glee,
Much more of such sport may we all live to see.

LIST OF MEMBERS ELECTED TO THE KILDARE HUNT CLUB, 1815-1838

<i>Elected</i>	<i>Address.</i>
1815. Lord Portarlington.	Emo Park.
1815. Sir H. Parnell, Bart.	Emo Park.
1815. Mr John Mills Foster.	Killibegs.
1815. Mr T. H. Royce.	Limerick.
1816. Mr Peter Purcell.	Halverstown.
1816. Mr C. E. Kennedy.	Kilbride.
1816. Mr E. Mayne.	
1816. Mr Ed. Fitzgerald.	
1817. Mr John Nangle.	Clonard.
1818. Col Bagot.	Narney, Kildare.
1818. Col Loftus.	Naas.
1818. Mr John O'Reilly.	Baltrasna, Old- castle.
1818. Col. the Hon. . . de Ros.	Carton, May- nooth.
1818. Captn the Hon. . . Anson.	Kildare St Club.
1818. Mr Robt Cornwall.	Kildare St Club.
1818. Mr Geo. Danes.	York St, Dublin.
1818. Sir Gerald Aylmer.	Donadea, Kil- cock.
1818. Mr Joshua Nunn.	Millcastle, Broad- way.

SIR JOHN KENNEDY, 1814-1841

<i>Elected</i>	<i>Address.</i>
1818. Mr H. Leeson.	Merrion St, Dublin.
1818. Mr Terence Flanagan.	Celbridge.
1818. Mr Hy Carroll.	Ballinure, Ballitore.
1819. Capt. Shedden.	Dublin Castle.
1819. Mr Marmaduke Cramer	Roberts.
	Sallymount, Kilkullen.
1819. Mr David La Touche.	Carlow.
1819. Mr John Brauman.	Granby Row, Dublin.
1819. The Earl of Milltown.	Russborough.
1819. Mr Robt Bourke.	Palmerstown.
1819. Mr H. Close.	Henry St, Dublin.
1819. Mr John Bonham.	Ballitore.
1820. Mr Wm Yelverton.	Sackville St, Dublin.
1823. Lord Ed. Chichester.	
1823. Mr Standish Deane Grady.	
1823. Mr Edward Dorny.	
1823. Mr Robt Lyster.	Harristown.
1823. Mr Robt Saunders.	
1823. Mr James Saunderson.	
1823. Mr Richd Fox.	
1823. Mr Hy Quin.	Wingfield, Co. Wicklow.
1825. Mr Betty.	Granby Rd, Dublin.
1825. Capt. Kean (or Kane).	Baggot St, Dublin

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

<i>Elected</i>	<i>Address.</i>
1825. Mr Thos Cannon.	Grangebeg,
1825. Mr Robt Gregory.	Dublin Castle.
1825. Major Powell.	Corkaga, Rathcoole.
1825. The Earl of Howth.	Howth Castle.
1825. Mr Rd More O'Ferrall.	Ballyna, Clonard.
1825. Mr G. Lindsey.	Dublin Castle.
1825. Mr Wm Hume.	Humewood, Baltinglass.
1826. Mr Ed. Beauman.	Furnace, Naas.
1826. Mr James Hamilton.	Gardner's Place, Dublin.
1827. Mr Goodstone.	Kilcock.
1827. Mr James Critchley.	Grangebeg.
1827. Mr George Evans.	Farmhill.
1830. Mr Robt Rynd.	Ryndville.
1830. Mr Arthur Brooke.	
1830. Mr Francis Armstrong.	
1830. Mr S. Mills.	Turnings.
1830. Mr George O'Kelly.	Barrettstown.
1830. Lord Brabazon.	
1830. Mr James Power.	
1830. Mr Rinting O'Reilly.	
1830. Mr Michael Law.	
1831. Mr Thos Barton.	Straffan.
1831. Mr D. O. C. Hinchey.	Stonebrook.
1832. Lord Clements.	
1832. Mr Harvey Cassidy.	Monastereven.
1832. Mr Rd Mansell.	Oakley Park, Cel- bridge.
1832. Mr Geo. Woods.	

SIR JOHN KENNEDY, 1814-1841

Elected

1834. Col Smith.
1835. Viscount Powerscourt.
1835. Hon. George Vaughan.
1836. Hon. Ed. Lawless.
1836. Mr John La Touche.
1836. Mr Robt La Touche.
1836. Mr Wm La Touche.
1836. Col King.
1836. Mr John Dillon.
1836. Mr Thos Carter.
1836. Mr Pratt Tynte.
1836. Mr Albemarle Cator.
1838. Mr Thos Kearney.
1838. Mr T. Woolfe.

Address.

Baltiboys.

CHAPTER V

MR JOHN LA TOUCHE, 1841-1846

I AM left again without even such guidance as was forthcoming from the old minute book, which, after a broken and halting story of the proceedings of the Kildare Hunt Club during thirty-four years, ends incontinently in 1838, three years before Sir John Kennedy resigned the hounds. It is known, however, that Sir John, like his predecessor, Sir Fenton Aylmer, generously presented the pack to the Hunt, the destinies of which now passed into the guidance of another notable family of Kildare sportsmen, the La Touches of Harristown.

This family was at the time represented by Mr John La Touche, who succeeded Sir John Kennedy as Master of the Kildare Hounds, and was the elder of three brothers, all noted as men devoted to the sport. Mr John La Touche himself was a good if not a dashing rider, and had other qualities which made him a very successful master; his twin



MR. JOHN LA TOUCHE, M.F.H. 1841-1846.

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brother, Robert La Touche, was a brilliant horseman and one of the keenest sportsmen who ever rode in Kildare; while the younger brother, William La Touche, was perhaps the greatest authority on the breeding and management of hounds who ever lived in Kildare or elsewhere. It is a curious fact that he cared little for the actual sport in the field, and scarcely rode at all after the year 1846. His nephew, Mr Percy La Touche, remembers him a few years later, it is true, when he sometimes took him out as a small boy and watched over his performances on a pony. But Wm La Touche had at that time long given up regular hunting, and would ride a carriage horse to be with his nephew. Hounds, however, and everything to do with them, were the passion of his life. For the best part of his life he spent one whole day of the week, Wednesday, in the kennels, and I shall have frequently to notice the beneficent effect of his care of all that concerned the pack during the reigns of several successive Masters of the Hunt. Here I only note that a new era in the history of the Kildare pack was inaugurated by the assistance he gave his brother in that all-important branch of the management.

From what Mr Percy La Touche tells me, his father's opening season was marked by a serious accident. Mr John La Touche was exercising

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hounds in the summer of 1841, and got a very bad fall, which necessitated a long rest and a journey abroad in the following winter, when he made a tour in the Mediterranean. In an old diary of his, his son once saw, he wrote enthusiastically of a fox he viewed on the Rock of Gibraltar, and he was in Egypt at the time of the massacre of the Mamelukes. In these circumstances it seems probable to me that there was an interregnum just after his taking the hounds, which was probably bridged over by his brother Robert in the field, and certainly by Wm La Touche at the kennel. If I am right in that supposition, I am brought nearer to the real beginning of his active lead in the field by a letter which has been very kindly placed at my disposal by Colonel Tynte, to whose father, Mr Pratt Tynte, Mr John La Touche wrote as follows in 1843:

Harristown,

Sept. 17th, 1843.

My dear Tynte,

As my proposition of taking £300 a year to keep hounds and horses was agreed to at the meeting held at Naas last July, I have been consulting with Mr Carroll and other members of the Committee, and they do not think it necessary to have a meeting on the 29th September, but we have divided the country in the following ways, and Edward Ken-

MR JOHN LA TOUCHE, 1841-1846

nedy has consented to act as Treasurer for the Committee, and the Committee begin upon the management of the country after the 29th September.

Lord Clonmell

Castletown, Ardrass, Lodge Park, Lady Castle, Turnings, Bellavilla, Castle Kealy.

E. Kennedy.

Castlebagot, Coolmines, Gouchers, Punchbowl, Three Castles, Downshire, Baltiboy's, Hollywood, Geoghanstown, Moorehill.

W. Kennedy.

Arthurstown, Furness, Kerdiffstown, Killashee, Mullicash, Kilcullen, Kinra, Curragh Coverts, Moorefield, Dunmurrey, Lord Harburton's, Martinstown, Halverstown, Hatfield.

C. Rynd.

Hortland, Donadea, Laragha, Tatoo, Rathcoffey, Clongowes.

R. Rynd.

Ballyna, Blackwater, Ryndville, Johnstown, Cloncurry, Grange.

W. Aylmer.

Rahan, Ballindoolan, etc.

You and Carroll manage the Ballytore country same as before with the addition of Cryhelp and Coldwell Coverts.

Hoping you will approve of these arrangements,
Believe me,

Yrs. very sincerely,

JOHN LA TOUCHE.

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

This letter, as will be seen, contains valuable information and for a brief moment, at least, supplies the loss of any official annals at this period. In the first place the terms upon which Mr La Touche took the hounds manifestly surpass in modesty the generous arrangement carried out for so many years by Sir John Kennedy, who, as we have seen, ran the Hunt on a subscription beginning at £500 a year and increased towards the end of his Mastership to £800. It is clear from this letter that Mr La Touche took the hounds on a guarantee of no more than £300 a year. Sir John Kennedy was obviously a difficult man to succeed in any case, but to take up the Hunt where he left it and to show continuous sport on a subscription of £300 a year, as Mr John La Touche undoubtedly did, seems to me to prove conclusively his devotion to the welfare of the Hunt and his sterling qualities as a sportsman. His huntsman was a man named Jim Burne, and Mr George Mansfield, a very hard rider of the period, honorary secretary to the Club.

For the rest, I note with interest that the older system of dividing the country into districts, each under the charge of a member of the Hunt, was revived, and that in the absence of all records of the ballots, the letter introduces to our history the names of some few of another generation of Kildare sportsmen.

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Mr La Touche's Mastership inaugurated a new era in the Kildare Hunt, presided over by the La Touche dynasty, a dynasty really dominated by the personality of the younger of the three brothers, Wm La Touche. The characters of the three brothers are very admirably presented in a set of verses written by Mrs John La Touche, the gifted lady of Harristown, whose intellectual qualities and the influence they exerted on all who were privileged to know her are so admirably set out in the volume of memoirs of that lady published some few years ago. These verses I am very kindly allowed to print by Mr Percy La Touche, and they present very happily, I think, the personalities of the three brothers as they appeared to a sympathetic relative, who, however, was no enthusiastic admirer of fox-hunting.

But though these men are very far from quiet;
They don't like war but other kinds of riot.
They're curious people, for a bit of fun,
I think I'll just describe them every one,
And as I hope they're men of common sense
I don't imagine that they'll take offence.

Now for the first: But hold, not mine the right
To bring his virtues or his faults to light,
Let other bards attempt satiric lays,
Impartial censure and impartial praise;

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His virtues they alone unbiased see,
And for his faults, he has no faults to me.

Having thus neatly evaded a description of her husband, Mrs La Touche turned to his twin brother Robert.

Come forth, thou child of frolic and of mirth,
Thou who can'st laugh at all the ills of earth,
Come with thy merry face and sparkling eye
Radiant with fun and harmless raillery,
What shall I say of thee? My comic Muse
Looks sharply round for something to accuse
And longs to give thee her severest strain,
But much I fear that she will seek in vain.
Behold him proudly standing at the door
Poisoning the wholesome air with his cigar;
Napoleon like, with folding arms he stands
As if the world awaited his commands;
His thoughts, if thoughts he have, have taken
flight,
To some wild hunting country out of sight,
In fancy listening to the much loved sounds
Of horns, and trampling steeds, and baying
hounds,
He longs to hear the whip's resounding crack
And leap exulting on Kilmoyler's back,
High raised above the earth in lofty state
Showing the love that small things bear to great.
Or see him sitting at his own fireside
His bursting laugh resounding far and wide

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While those around him at the social hearth
Are all infected with contagious mirth,
Until the very soul of boisterous fun
Called forth by him, pervades them every one,
And when the evening ends, we all agree
Time ne'er was known to pass so merrily.

Mrs La Touche finishes with the following portrait of the younger of the three brothers, William La Touche.

Now let us shift the scene. Come forth thou sage
Endowed with wisdom far above thine age,
Come forth with stately step and solemn pace
Thought in thine eye, and silence in thy face.
Thou solid character, too deep and wise
For humble bards like me to satirize
I know thou wilt forgive my thoughtless lays
And heed alike my censure and my praise.
Remember I am far too weak to brook
The withering fire of thy reproachful look
For I do fear thee most of all the lot;
I pray thee, dreaded one, despise me not.
He comes, the last, not least, of all the three
Walking erect in native dignity
In his dark eyes strange glimmering flashes glow
Like watch fires set to scare away a foe,
Now turned to view the turnip fields around,
Now fixed in silent thought upon the ground.

(Written at Harristown in 1844.)

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Mr Robert Kennedy remembers all three brothers very well and tells me that all were great sportsmen, good "houndmen," and good "countrymen," and that both brothers gave Mr John La Touche great assistance during his mastership. They were all fine riders to hounds, and the late Mr Robert Watson told Mr Kennedy that Wm La Touche was the finest houndman he had ever known, which is an interesting confirmation by a great authority of the commonly received opinion. Mr Kennedy also remembers hearing the brothers agree that the three coverts in the Kildare district of which foxes were fondest during their time were Johnstown, Moore Hill and Nine Tree Hill.

No one will ever know the expense and trouble which Mr William La Touche went to in his care of the hounds; he was an exceedingly silent man, given to few words and undemonstrative in every way; but it is general knowledge that he took unheard-of pains with what was the passion of his life. Mr Percy La Touche tells me that he used practically only Belvoir and Brocklesby sires, and made every possible inquiry as to a dog's performance in the field before he would use him. He bought extensively at Mr G. S. Foljambe's sale in 1845, where he had Lord Henry Bentinck and Lord Galway as opponents in the sale ring, and was

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also a great buyer at Sir Matthew White Ridley's sale in the same year.

Mr Robert Watson, for so many years Master of the Carlow hounds, was present at the sale of Mr G. S. Foljambe's hounds with Mr La Touche, and mentioned some particulars to Mr W. B. Forbes, who has been so good as to write down for me his recollection of the conversation he had with Mr Watson on the subject.

The hounds were sold by Tattersall at the kennels at East Retford, and Mr La Touche was a large buyer, Lord Henry Bentinck and Lord Galway being his principal opponents. The pack fetched 3,575 guineas, which was probably a record in those days. It is said that Mr La Touche caused a luncheon bell to be rung just as some lots in which he was specially interested came up, and so evaded some competition in the bidding. Among these was the famous draft hound, sister to Rallywood.

Mr La Touche went over again in the same year to Sir Matthew White Ridley's sale and brought back some very fine hounds. At the Foljambe sale Mr La Touche bought chiefly brood bitches and their whelps, but at the Ridley sale he bought entered hounds, and a good many couple of them. Among the brood bitches from the Foljambe sale was one by Ranter, the best son of Osbaldestone's celebrated Furrier, and another by Albion, sire of

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Lord H. Bentinck's Tomboy, which he is said to have considered the best hound in England.

Sir M. White Ridley's pack was bought from Lord Galway when he gave up the Rufford in 1838. They had much of the Osbaldestone blood in them. The sale in June, 1845, realized £773 3s. for forty-two couples of hounds and including brood bitches and whelps.

Mr Percy La Touche tells me, as illustrating the immense care that his uncle took with the breeding and choice of sires, that he was once told by Frank Goodall that when his father, the famous Will Goodall, died, he found sheaves of letters from Mr Wm La Touche with inquiries concerning hounds, their performance and pedigrees, all of which Will Goodall had treasured during his lifetime.

Mr Robert Kennedy also remembers an interesting trait of this famous sportsman. Long after he had given up riding to hounds he was always eager to hear of the incidents of each day's hunting, and it was Mr Kennedy's custom to call when in Dublin and give Mr La Touche at the bank* an account of any run he had seen. There was, however, one very important condition which was understood when Mr Kennedy began his story. As soon as the run was mentioned Mr La Touche's invariable

*La Touche's Bank, at the top of Cork Hill, Dublin.

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question was, " Was it straight? " It did not matter however good a ringing run might have been, he would hear no word of it. If Mr Kennedy had to say " No " in reply to his inquiry it was of no use his proceeding, " he at once wished me good morning and showed me out. If, however," continued Mr Kennedy, " I replied ' Yes,' he lighted up at once, and I had to describe the run over and over again. I heard when a child that Wm La Touche was really the best rider of the three brothers at the time when they all three rode to hounds."

When Mr J. La Touche took the hounds James Byrne, the first whip from Johnstown, was made huntsman, and Martin Quirke was promoted to first whip. They were both thirsty souls. After the first season Mr La Touche hunted the hounds himself, and got a kennel huntsman from England. The hounds were very carefully attended to and the coverts well and properly cut. Fowl money was lavishly paid to all who produced the heads and legs of poultry, and it was said there grew up a heavy trade in giblets between Dublin and Kildare as a consequence. Foxes became scarce during the later part of Mr La Touche's Mastership, owing in great part to the Repeal agitation; indeed, Mr La Touche himself declared that Kildare was only a two days a week country at that time.

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In after years Stephen Goodall was at exercise with the hounds when he met Mr John La Touche at Dunstown. He remained looking at the hounds for at least half an hour, and at last when Goodall told him that he had never met with anyone so fond of hounds and asked him why he never hunted, the reply was as he walked sadly away, "I dare not, I dare not."

In the absence of any diaries of the period covered by Mr La Touche's Mastership I am unable to give any definite particulars of the sport shown, but it was undoubtedly good. Mr Percy La Touche remembers his father saying that the best run was from a find at Eadestown, then considered the best covert in the Kildare country. Mr Robert Kennedy, then a young boy, heard the run described after dinner at Johnstown, where the three brothers La Touche slept the night. After the find at Eadestown they ran straight to Fore-naughts, then by Newtown Mills and straight for the hills. The fox was killed between Tinode and Downshire after a run of forty minutes at the very best pace. Mr W. La Touche, says Mr Kennedy, "showed the skirts of his coat to all beholders," and Mr Kennedy remembers a remark of Mr R. La Touche, "hounds were never touched. All the horses were played out. Mr John La Touche was riding a little thoroughbred horse by Sir Hercules,

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but had to finish on his feet, when he took the fox from the hounds himself. He sold the horse later to the late Duke of Cambridge for £300, but he was no good after the gruelling he got on that day."

Some few anecdotes survive from this notable dynasty of the La Touche family. The Ward Union stag hounds used occasionally to meet near Johnstown and Kildare men used to turn out. Mr Carroll, the crack rider of Kildare, used to tell how the Ward men would watch him, and then he had to ride for his life and he beat all but one man, who caught him and knocked him over. As he rode away this man remarked, "Bad luck to ye, you spoiled me lep."

Mr Robert Kennedy remembers seeing as a small boy Robert La Touche cut down the field on his famous grey mare with the stag from Johnstown to Killeel. La Touche said it was his first day with the stag and would be his last, for when hounds threw up in a lane under Killeel, and he asked a man if he had seen the stag, the reply was, "I have her here in the stable, yer honour, with the cow and the ass. Glad ye've had a straight run at last."

Mr Robert Watson, for many years Master of the Carlow hounds, but who hunted frequently with the Kildare, used to tell a good story about one of the runs of this period. Mr Watson was one

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of a party assembled at a country house, which included most of the men who had seen the finish. Another member of the Hunt, who, however, had not got to the end, was also of the party, and during the discussion was eloquent, as was his custom, about the superior way in which he was mounted. "I've just been thinking," he remarked, "about the amount of money I had between my legs in that run to-day. The chestnut cost me £350, and the second horse £250, £700 altogether, and they were well worth every penny of it." There was a lull in the conversation, and the gentleman, turning to Mr Watson, resumed, "By the by, Watson, that was a good nag you were on to-day." "He is indeed," was the reply. "What did you give for him?" "Sixteen pounds ten," replied Mr Watson, amid a roar of laughter.

This was the fact. The horse he called Quaker, and he bought him of a man who asked him to buy him because he could not keep him on the land, so he gave that exact sum for him. He was a good horse, and though he never got him to change his legs at a fence he seldom fell.

That bond of affection and good fellowship and good sportsmanship between the three brothers, which is so pleasant a memory of Harristown of the middle years of the last century, was rudely broken by a tragedy in 1846, when Mr Robert La Touche

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died almost instantaneously in the stand at the Curragh races of that year. His elder brother John gave up the hounds and never rode again. Wm La Touche continued his care of the pack for many years after, to the enduring advantage of the Kildare Hunt, but his nephew tells me that he gave up all active part in hunting at the same time.

CHAPTER VI

MR O'CONNOR HENCHY, 1846-1847

UPON the resignation of Mr La Touche, which took place in September, the ordinarily difficult problem of finding a successor in the Mastership was perhaps made more difficult by the time of the year at which the vacancy had occurred. But there was a very large attendance at a meeting called to consider the matter at McEvoy's Hotel in Naas, and after much debate had taken place without result a voice was heard in the room saying simply, "I will take the hounds." The voice was that of Mr O'Connor Henchy of Stonebrook, at that time, I think, Liberal member for County Kildare, and the Hunt was again fortunate in finding another Kildare man as Master.

It is hardly necessary to recall the fact that the year of Mr O'Connor Henchy's acceptance of that responsible position was that of the disastrous failure of the potato crop in Ireland, that time of famine which brought such misery on the country



MR. O'CONNOR HENCHY, M.F.H. 1846-1847.

and had so profound an effect upon its fortunes. It is not surprising, I think, to find a dearth of information upon the sport of those dreadful years, years of starvation intensified by political trouble, by State trials and suspensions of Habeas Corpus Acts. It is a wonder indeed that fox-hunting was found possible at all, and there was at one moment a question of suspending it altogether. Certainly the difficulties of the Mastership must have been increased tenfold, and the Kildare Hunt owes a great debt of gratitude to Mr O'Connor Henchy for coming forward at such a time to keep the long tradition of Kildare sport unbroken.

As a fact the famine was felt more severely in other parts of Ireland than in Kildare, though, of course, there was misery everywhere. One single figure may be quoted which will suggest the difficulty of keeping people alive in Ireland in that dreadful winter of 1846-7. Oatmeal was £22 a ton. But the resident gentry set resolutely to work in Kildare as elsewhere and formed depots where soup and food were distributed to the country people. There is often a touch of humour forthcoming in Ireland to relieve the darkest situations. At one of these depots established by Mr Carroll at Ballinure the people might either drink the soup and eat the food on the spot or send their children for it to carry to their homes. At Ballinure one old

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lady remained a long while and ate and drank all the time. It was at last hinted that perhaps she had had enough and might make way for some of the children who were waiting . She replied by passing her bowl again with the remark, “ I am not full.”

I shall make no attempt to trace any record of the sport shown by Mr O'Connor Henchy during the two seasons of his Mastership, but in all the circumstances he must have done exceedingly well to hunt three days a week. The kennels were at Mountcashel, and the men were turned out in very good style. The Master himself was exceedingly popular with the country people, among whom he was known as “ The Pride of Kildare,” and was certainly not less so among his own friends of the Hunt. He was a bachelor, and of a most hospitable nature, and Stonebrook was always filled with hunting guests whenever the meets were near. Mr O'Connor Henchy's unfailing good humour made him often the object of more or less embarrassing practical jokes at these parties, of which many stories are still remembered in the district.

I find from an old account rendered to the Club at the end of 1847 that subscriptions and field money produced a revenue of £1,083, and that the expenses amounted to £1,559, thus leaving a deficit of £475. But considering the difficulties of

MR O'CONNOR HENCHY, 1846-1847

the times and the circumstances, it is obvious that things might have been much worse. Before passing on I may just note that it was Mr O'Connor Henchy who introduced a notable hunt servant to the Kildare country in the person of Backhouse, whom he imported from England as huntsman for the Kildare from the Holdernessee, where he was first whip. Backhouse was a great trainer of hounds and probably a huntsman after Mr Wm La Touche's own heart, for he was gentle in his methods, and never moved or touched them. He was a pleasant, talkative man, but was much disliked by the farmers and peasants, who probably failed to understand his alien forms of pleasantries. Backhouse was never particular as to what he said or how he said it, even to his employers. On one occasion a member of the Hunt who was a particularly plain man, rode up to him and confessed that he had just turned the fox back. "No wonder," replied the huntsman, staring hard into the face of the sportsman.

Backhouse continued through the two years of Mr Henchy's Mastership, and acted as huntsman for a short time for Mr Wm Kennedy, Mr Henchy's successor. But his methods of dealing with hounds did not appeal to the hard riders who were yearly becoming more prominent in Kildare fields, as elsewhere. These gentlemen thought him

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slow, and Backhouse threw up his post and eventually returned to the Holderness, with whom he remained as huntsman for the rest of his life, some twenty-five years.

Mr Robert Kennedy again comes to my aid with some interesting recollections of Backhouse. At the time we are considering second horses were almost unknown in Kildare, and, says Mr Kennedy:

“ Backhouse as a consequence was a most careful man to nurse his hounds, always saying when hounds ran fast ‘ They didn’t want me, so I held hard.’ He once lost during a long hunting run a silver presentation horn, and next day had all his family out to look for it, including his wife, with the happy result that it was found. His wonderful double on that horn when a fox went away was stirring to hear, and the same triumphant note was heard at every race at the Hunt meetings as the horses jumped the last fence.

“ Backhouse was much helped in the field by Wilson, an excellent first whip, who had a wondrous voice, and whose ‘ Who-whoop ’ was grand to hear. Wilson went from Kildare to Ballydarton, where, when Mr Robert Watson was one day lecturing him, he put on his hat, and with the remark that it covered his whole family, he left Ballydarton for good and all. O’Connor Henchy to the last drove out in his carriage only to hear the cry of hounds.”

The arrival at a middle period in our history I think affords a suitable opportunity to take a glance, however brief, at another branch of sport which has long been identified with that of fox-hunting in Kildare, I mean that tradition of steeple-chasing which can be traced back nearly a century to its origin at the local hunt meetings, and which in process of time culminated in those meetings at Punchestown which are to-day famous throughout the world of sport.

Exact information as to the early racing in Kildare is unfortunately very scanty, but there is no doubt that very early in the nineteenth century it was the custom of the members of the Hunt to improvise some modest little meeting at which gentlemen and farmers alike could indulge their taste for riding over a typical bit of Kildare country. It is hardly necessary to say that these early meetings were not held at Punchestown, and it is clear that until the first Punchestown meeting took place in 1850 the Kildare sportsmen had no fixed habitation, and that the races were held wherever a suitable course seemed to present itself. Thus I find records of races held at Rathgorragh, that bit of country just south of Kill Hill, an excellent course, every yard and every fence of which can be seen from the hill, which is still well known to members of the Hunt. It is not less familiar to officers quar-

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tered at the Curragh, at Newbridge, or Kildare, and there have been many Sportsmen's or Red Coat Races as well as Regimental Races held over the same course. It is altogether a typical bit of Kildare country, the fences are quite fair, and the course could hardly be improved upon for a small steeplechase meeting. I find other meetings were held at Kilcock, at Corbally Harbour, at Burnt Furze under Furness Wood, at Rathcoole, at Naas (where, however, was only flat-racing); others, again, rather vaguely described as "over a sporting country."

The first of these meetings of which there is definite record was held on October 22, 1824, when sport was provided for two days. The next seems to have been held in 1827 on May 28 and lasted for no less than four days. In 1828 they managed to make up a programme for five days, from May 27 to 31 inclusive. The generous scale upon which sport was provided in that year may have produced a surfeit. At any rate there was no further meeting until 1830, and then only for one day, May 25. In 1831 they were also content with a single day, May 24. In the following year, 1832, there was both a Spring and an Autumn meeting, on May 22 and September 25. For the next four years, 1833-6, there was a single day's sport fixed for the end of May in each year. How the programme was filled up it is difficult to say. I find mention of as

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many as five races in 1830; there were four in each of the other meetings, except in 1832, when only a single race is recorded.

Few particulars of the sport at these meetings have survived. But there were doubtless many races and matches organized by local sportsmen to provide the fun which Irishmen love on such occasions during the four days during which some of the meetings continued. Certainly we may people those old meetings with all the typical company of an Irish race meeting which has very little changed with the times. Here, for example, is a contemporary account taken from *Paddy Kelly's Budget* in 1834, a somewhat scurrilous publication, which nevertheless preserves for us an undoubtedly accurate picture of some aspects of the life in Ireland of that period.

Describing the meeting held at the Back Lane at Naas in that year the writer says:

“ The course has been considerably improved since last year. 'Tis situated about half a mile outside the town at the back of the ruins of Jigginstown Castle, a little off the Newbridge Road; 'tis about a mile and a quarter in circumference and from the central elevation of the ground even the pedestrian could see a race all round. There were, however, a couple of ill constructed stands erected on which we did not choose to risk our precious

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carcasses, and there was one continuous line of tents stretched from east to west of the course in which many a rustic couple figured away in reels, jigs, and hornpipes to the well known airs of 'Shiver the Quilt,' 'Father Jack Walsh,' 'My duck's in the house,' 'The Night of the Fun' etc. etc. to the astonishment and delight of the circum-ambulatory natives."

We have also the advantage of the same journal's observations upon the meeting held at Kilcock in 1833.

We'd many a stiff necked brat of a dandy
Lots of Parliament, potheen and brandy,
Carloads of nieces and country cousins
Jingles and old charabangs in dozens,
Bogtrotters, turfcutters, butchers and bakers,
Jackasses, parsons, a few undertakers;
Pawnbrokers pledging their honour and word;
Pickpockets found you wherever you stirred.
Some girls handsome and some girls shy
Whose names you shall have in print by and
bye;
Country attorneys and country squireens,
Jarveys and donkeys and one horse machines;
Some people sober and some people drunk,
Unlucky gamesters in a hell of a funk.
Sugarstick, gingerbread not at all spiced,
Cripples on crutches, legs broken and spliced.

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Crabapples and currants, cooks, cowboys and
cods

The knowing coves giving and taking the odds.

These and of rum 'uns a very large stock

I met at the races last week at Kilcock.

To anyone knowing the sort of company that assembles at Sportsmen's Races in Ireland to-day it will be obvious that the character of that company has little changed since the year 1833.

Although there is mention from very early times of horse racing on the Curragh of Kildare it was at such local meetings as these that the steeplechasing in Ireland, which we know to-day as a vigorous and popular institution, took its origin and attained its first development, and that early development was, I think, much assisted by the presentation of a cup by the Kildare Hunt to be run for annually at these local meetings. The first official record of this cup, "The Kildare Hunt Steeplechase; Two miles over a sporting country," is for the year 1837, when it was won by a horse named Zephyr, owned by Mr Lynch. But Mr Robert Kennedy informs me that the first Kildare Hunt Cup was won by Mr Thomas Cramer Roberts. He cannot recollect the year, but as it was during the Viceroyalty of Lord Normanby, which began in 1835, it must have been in that year

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

or in 1836. Lord Normanby indeed was present with his staff, "a brilliantly pleasant staff," says Mr Kennedy, "which included Bernal Osborne," and as Lord Normanby stayed the night at Johnstown the meeting was presumably at Rathgorrah. Mr Kennedy remembers that Mr E. Beaumont of Furness was second, and it was said at the time that he might have won, but from good nature he let his friend, Mr Thomas Cramer Roberts, who was his guest at Furness, win.

As I have said, the first official records of the Kildare Hunt begin in 1837, and are to be found in the Racing Calendar for that year, then edited by Robert Hunter, who for many years was Keeper of the Match Book and head official of the Irish Turf Club. This meeting, which took place on March 7 of that year, I think is of sufficient interest to be recorded, and the record is as follows:

KILDARE HUNT STEEPLECHASE

Tuesday, March 7, 1837

The Kildare Hunt Cup, and Sweepstakes of 5 sovs. p.p. Ridden by Members; 12 st. each. Two miles over a sporting country.

Mr Lynch's ch. m. Zephyr (Owner)	1
Mr W. Mansfield's ch. g. Paul Clifford	2
Mr Mills's ch. g. Pitch and Toss	3

MR O'CONNOR HENCHY, 1846-1847

Forty sovs. given by the Members of the Hunt.
Same two miles; 12 st. each. Each horse entering
paying one pound, which went to the second horse.

Mr Metcalf's bl. g. Blacklock (Mr Orr)	1
Mr C. Flood's ch. g. Beauty	2
Mr Mothersill's gr. h. Ramping Dick	3

Thirty sovs.; also given by the Members of the
Hunt. Two miles; 10 st. 7 lb. each. Ten sub-
scribers at one sov. each to the second horse.

Mr J. Mansfield's gr. g. Rakeaway, 5 years old (Kennedy)	1
Mr H. Coates's b. m. Agenora	2
Mr Aylmer's Norah	3

The Ponsonby Bowl, and Sweepstakes of 3 sovs.
p.p., to which Sir J. Kennedy added 10 gs. Weight
for age—three years old, 8 st. 7 lb.; four years old,
9 st. 7 lb.; five years old, 10 st. 2 lb.; six years and
aged, 10 st. 7 lb. Same course. 3 lb. allowed to
mares and geldings.

Mr J. Mansfield's gr. g. Rakeaway, 5 years old (Kennedy)	1
Mr Duffy's ch. m. Madam Pasta, aged	2
Mr Mansfield's gr. m. Spice, five years old	3

I have described on a former page how the
Ponsonby Bowl, mentioned above, was presented
by Mr Frederick Ponsonby of Bishops court to
Sir John Kennedy in trust, as a trophy or challenge

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

cup for a farmers' race, to be kept only by a rider winning it three years in succession. It seems to have provided a race for about eight meetings, at the last of which it was won for the third time, as already stated, by Colonel Wodehouse, who held land at Eyrefield, near the Curragh. There was some hostile criticism as to his qualification as "a farmer," but the bowl was eventually handed over to him, and became his property.

The Ponsonby Bowl seems to have been the chief attraction of the Hunt Races of 1840, and the very short account of that meeting is perhaps worthy of record:

KILDARE HUNT RACES

Monday, April 20, 1840

The Ponsonby Bowl; Sweepstakes of 3 sovs. each, p.p.' 10 sovs. added for horses *bona fide* the property of Landholders of the County Kildare. Weight for age—three years old, 8 st. 7 lb.; four years old, 9 st. 7 lb.; five years old, 10 st. 2 lb.; six years old and aged, 10 st. 7 lb. 3 lb. allowed to mares and geldings—thorough-bred horses to carry 7 lb. extra.

Mr Rutherdord's br. g. Paddy Whack 1

Mr Byrne's b. g. Heart of Oak and Mr Flood's

Lady Lilla also started, but were distanced.

MR O'CONNOR HENCHY, 1846-1847

Sweepstakes of 1 sov. each, with 10 sovs. added.
Same course as the Bowl, heats.

Mr Kennedy's bl. g. Sweeper, by Count Diebitsch	1
Mr Barrington's Valentine	2

The meeting of 1844 is interesting for a cup given by the officers of the First Royal Dragoons.

KILDARE HUNT STEEPLECHASE

Wednesday, March 20, 1844

Twenty sovs. given by the officers of the 1st Royal Dragoons; catch weight.

Mr M. Dunne's gr. g. Isaac (a boy)	1
Mr Kennedy's b. m. She's-all-my-Fancy	2

Details of the sport of these early meetings are scanty and difficult to obtain, but I have been so fortunate as to receive from Mr W. T. Kirkpatrick of Donacomper, Celbridge, some notes of the performances as amateur steeplechase rider of his father, the late Mr Alexander R. Kirkpatrick, in the early days of the Kildare Hunt Cup, which are altogether worthy of record, and recall very happily the sport of the middle years of the last century.

In 1845 Mr Kirkpatrick won the Kildare Hunt Cup on Pilgrim, a horse which was blind of an eye, in a field of three, Mr Burgh's Grisette being second and his Swindler third. In the same year,

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at Newtown, Celbridge, Mr Kirkpatrick on Pilgrim rode a match with Mr W. Kennedy on Sweet Pea for £25 a side, and won easily. The match was the result of a remark by Mr Kennedy, "If I had had Sweet Pea entered for the Hunt Cup you would not have won." It created great interest among the country people.

Mr W. T. Kirkpatrick tells me he is indebted to his old servant, John Carroll, for the particulars of this match, who wrote them down for him shortly before his death at Donacomper in 1906. Carroll was in his ninetieth year and died after a faithful service of seventy years at Donacomper. He began as stable boy for Mr Wm Kirkpatrick at the age of fifteen, and was stud groom and subsequently coachman to Mr Alexander Kirkpatrick, and coachman to the present Mr Kirkpatrick, the grandson of his first employer. He continued driving until he was over eighty, and when he was no longer able to climb on to the box he would walk down to the yard with the help of two sticks and superintend the grooming of the horses.

In 1846 Mr Alexander Kirkpatrick, as holder of the Hunt Cup, was asked whether he would object to its being run for at the Garrison Steeplechases at Dunboyne. He made no objection and the race was won by Mr Burgh's Swindler. Mr Kirkpatrick was upset at the third fence by Mr Madden on his

MR O'CONNOR HENCHY, 1846-1847

Mouslin Kitty and neither of them afterwards showed in the race. The same day Mr Kirkpatrick on Clinker won a sweepstakes of ten sovereigns each with twenty-five pounds added for horses *bona fide* the property of officers on full pay serving in Ireland, or members of the Hibernian, United Service, Kildare Street and Sackville Street Clubs. Riders at 12 st. must also be officers on full pay or members of those clubs. A newspaper report states that "Clinker made the running all through and won in a canter. Seven started. The line of country selected lay between Dunboyne and the Moor of Meath. The principal portion was over grass land and included nineteen fences of a fair sporting character with an artificial water cut of about 12 feet wide."

Mr Alexander Kirkpatrick used to say that if he had objected to the course at Dunboyne and had run Clinker for the Cup, he would almost certainly have won it, in which case he would have won the Cup three years in succession, and it would have been his property. But at the time he thought more of winning the Garrison Sweepstakes, which was the better race, and so entered his best horse for it.

In any case he won the Hunt Cup easily in the following year on Clinker from a field of four, Mr C. Warburton being second, and Mr Tom Conolly and Mr Costelloe making up the field. Mr

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Conolly, who ran third, said they might as well have been mounted on donkeys beside Clinker. Mr Kirkpatrick bought this fine horse at one of Lord Waterford's sales at Curraghmore. In the same year, 1847, Clinker, with a jockey up, ran fourth in the Grand National in a field of twenty-eight. His owner, who said he was badly ridden and should have done better, refused £500 for him at Liverpool, a high price in those days. He staked him later out hunting with the Kildares.

Another horse famous in Kildare annals, Lord Drogheda's Westmeath, first ran in the Hunt Cup in 1849, and won. He was ridden by Mr Henry Moore, who subsequently won it twice in succession on the same horse, and it became Lord Drogheda's property.

Many present members of the Hunt will remember Mr Alexr Kirkpatrick, who rode regularly with the hounds until his death in 1891, at the age of seventy-eight. He never destroyed a receipt in his life, and one of these showed that he bought his first red coat while an undergraduate at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he won a scholarship and took an honour degree in mathematics. His tutor said he would have been much better placed in the examinations if he had spent less time in riding and hunting.

It was not till 1850 that the advantages of the



THE MARQUESS OF DROGHEDA
One of the Chief Promoters and Organizer of Punchestown
and a Pillar of the Turf in Ireland.

famous course at Punchestown attracted the attention of Kildare sportsmen, who in that year and afterwards adopted that incomparable course as the place for meetings which had hitherto been held at odd places scattered about the Kildare country. Mr Robert Kennedy, whose recollections go back to that first meeting, well remembers hearing that great rider, Mr Edwards, say to another great rider, Mr Thomas, that Punchestown was the most beautiful course he had ever seen, and that he could not have believed that there was so perfect a course in the world. At first, and for a long time afterwards, no fence was touched, and the double was a fearful jump.

The arrangements at the early meetings were quite primitive. At one meeting they forgot all about the posts, and a horse and cart had to be sent off to a neighbouring covert for timber for the purpose. The riders, too, were weighed out with a steel-yard on a triangle on the course. On one occasion a race was won by a mare belonging to Mr Thomas Connor, of Newtown, near Johnstown, ridden by a Captain Proby, a brother of Lord Carysfort. But during the race the scales were tampered with, and as Captain Proby could not weigh out correctly the cup went to Mr Matthew Dunne, of Punchestown, the owner of the famous horse Wanderer, trained by the genius, John Hanlon, which won the Grand

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National. Hanlon had never been under a groom in his life, and he trained Wanderer on Coreen Hill. The horse won solely by his superb condition. I give here the official account of the first Punchestown meeting.

APRIL

KILDARE HUNT RACES, PUNCHESTOWN COURSE

Monday, April 1, 1850

The Hunt Cup, added to a Sweepstakes of 5 sovs. each, p.p., for horses the property of Members of the Kildare Hunt, ridden by the same according to the original Articles. About three miles. 12 st. each.

Mr T. De Burgh's ch. m. Medora, by Philip the

First (Owner)

1

Mr C. Warburton's br. h. Switcher (Owner)

2

Lord Drogheda's b. h. Westmeath (Mr Moore)

3

Twenty-five sovs. given by the Members of the Kildare Hunt, added to a Sweepstakes of 1 sov. each, p.p., for horses *bona fide* the property of farmers residing, and holding at least 20 acres of land within the limits of the Kildare Hunting District, and to be their property one month before the day of running. Weight for age—four years old, 10 st. 6 lb.; five years old, 11 st. 6 lb.; six years old and aged, 12 st. The winner of a Steeplechase of the value of £30, including his own stake, to carry 7 lb. extra; the winner of £50, including his own stake, to carry 14 lb. extra. The winner to be sold

MR O'CONNOR HENCHY, 1846-1847

for £80 by public auction, immediately after the race, and the surplus (if any above the selling price) to go to the fund. Horses entering to be sold for £50, allowed 14 lb.; if for £30, allowed 21 lb.; and if for £20 allowed 24 lb. The second horse received five sovs. out of the stakes, and the third saved his stake. About three miles.

Mr C. Rochford's b. g. Reynard, aged, 11 st.

(J. Ryan)	1
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Mr T. Byrne's br. m. Weazle, 4 years, 9 st. 6 lb.	2
---	---

Mr J. Headen's b. m. Penelope, five years, 9 st. 13 lb.	3
--	---

Five ran.

Stewards' Plate of £10, given to be run for by the following horses, in consequence of a mistake at the start for the foregoing races:

Mr Hoysted's b. m. Wee One, by Birdcatcher, four years, 9 st. 6 lb. (P. Keegan)	1
--	---

Mr White's ch. m. Harmony, by Apollo, aged, 11 st.	2
---	---

Mr M. Dunne's br. h. Clinker, five years, 11 st. 7 lb.	3
---	---

Eight ran.

Open Race, 15 sovs., given by Members of the Kildare Hunt, added to a Sweepstakes of 10s. each, p.p., for all horses. Weight for age—three years old, 8 st. 6 lb.; four years old, 9 st. 9 lb.; five years old, 10 st. 6 lb.; six years old and aged, 11 st. The winner to be sold for £40 by public

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auktion, immediately after the race, and the surplus (if any above the selling price) to go to the Fund. Horses entering to be sold for £30 allowed 10 lb.; if for £20, 20 lb.; and if for £10, 30 lb. The second horse received two sovs. out of the stakes, the third saved his stake. Two miles. The winner of a Steeple Race before the 1st of April, 1850, carried 14 lb. extra.

Mr Magennis's b. g. Blue Pill, by Pioneer, aged, 8 st. 10 lb. (Cusack)	1
Mr Hall's bl. g. The Sadler, aged, 10 st. 4 lb.	2
Mr Lynch's br. h. Doctor, six years, 11 st. 14 ran.	3

It is generally admitted that the Punchestown meetings owed much of their success to the Corinthian Cup first run for in 1853. That cup was established by Mr "Billy" Hutchinson, a son of Lord Donoughmore. It was first won by Mr Peter Wilkins, who was veterinary surgeon in the 11th Hussars, and, with his beautiful wife, was well known in Dublin. Later Billy Hutchinson won the Corinthian Cup on Torrent. He rarely hunted in Kildare, but kept the garrison staghounds, and had Dicky Bernard as first whip. Hutchinson was the immortal Sam Reynell's right hand in the making of the Meath country.

I give the official record of the first race for the Corinthian Cup.

MR O'CONNOR HENCHY, 1846-1847

KILDARE HUNT STEEPLECHASES, PUNCHES-
TOWN COURSE

March 28, 1853

CORINTHIAN CUP—Free Handicap of 5 sovs. each, with a piece of Plate value £50 added, for horses the property of Members of the Kildare Hunt, Sackville Street, or the United Service Clubs, or for horses the property of officers quartered in the Dublin district. Horses to have been hunted during the season 1852-53 in the counties of Dublin and Kildare, and to be ridden by Members of the above clubs, or by officers on full pay in the Army or Navy. Three miles.

Mr Wilkins's (11th Hussars), ch. g. The Squire, by Welcome, aged, 11 st. 11 lb. (Owner)	1
Lord Howth's ch. g. Poacher, aged, 12 st. 2 lb. (Mr Trench Nugent)	2
Mr C. Lyons (52nd Regt) ns. gr. g. Don Juan, aged, 12 st. 8 lb. (Hon. W. H. Hutchinson)	3
Mr C. Roche's ch. g. Cavalier, aged, 12 st. (Mr Warburton)	0

Seventeen ran.

Won by a neck. Half a length between second and third.

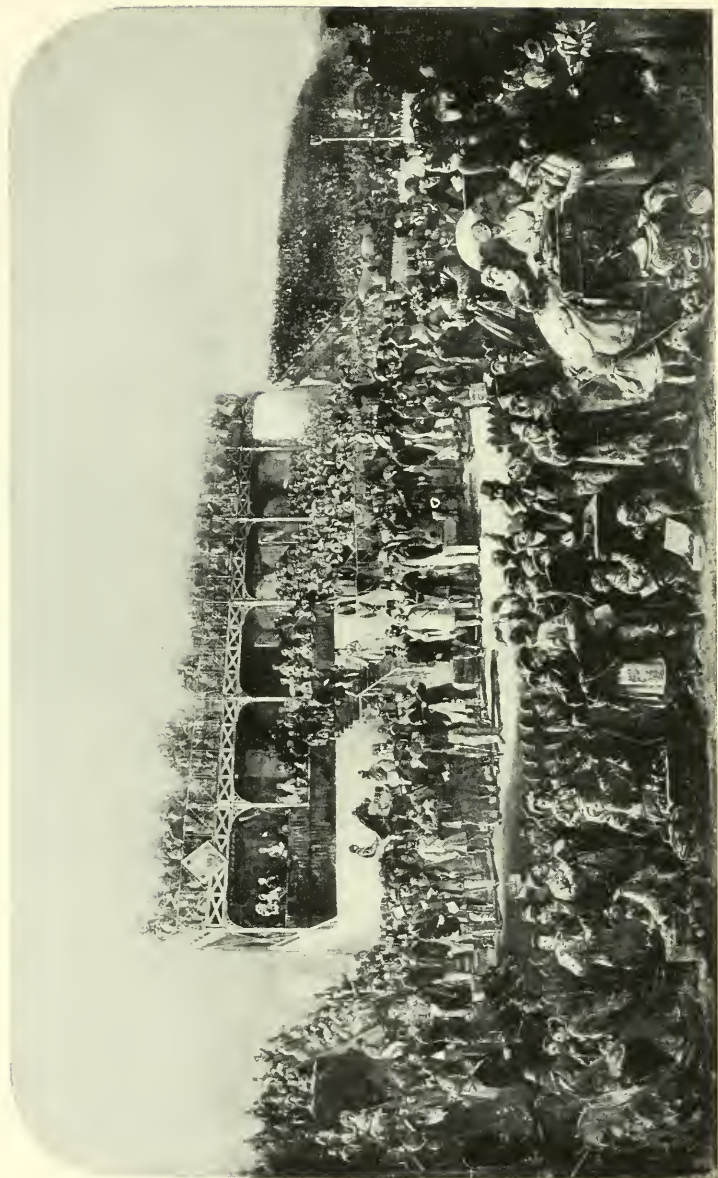
It would be superfluous here to say anything of the Punchestown meetings of succeeding years, a subject which falls outside the scope of our undertaking. But I think the winners of the Kildare Hunt Cup since its institution in 1836 may be worth recording.

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

KILDARE HUNT CUP

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Horse.</i>	<i>Owner.</i>	<i>Rider.</i>
1837.	Zephyr, ch. m.	Mr Lynch.	Owner.
1838.	Hawk, b. g.	Capt. Vaughan.	Mr Hamilton.
1841.	Forrester, b. g.	Major Wodehouse.	Owner.*
1842.	Bull-dog, b. h.	Mr Cecil Lawless.	Owner.
1843.	Fanny Elssler, ch. m.	Mr Dunne.	Owner.
1844.	Grisette, gr. m.	Mr T. Burgh.	Owner.
1845.	Pilgrim, b. h.	Mr Kirkpatrick.	Owner.
1847.	Clinker, ch. h.	Mr Kirkpatrick.	Owner.
1848.	Switcher, b. g.	Mr C. Warburton.	Owner.
1849.	West Meath, b. g.	Lord Drogheda.	Mr H. Moore.
1850.	Medora, ch. m.	Mr T. de Burgh.	Owner.
1851.	West Meath, b. g.	Lord Drogheda.	Mr Phillips.
1852.	West Meath, b. g.	Lord Drogheda.	Mr Warburton.
1853.	West Meath, b. g.	Lord Drogheda.	Mr Warburton.
1854.	Diamond, b. m.	Mr Oliver.	Owner.
1855.	Beware, ch. g.	Lord Drogheda.	Capt. Warburton.
1856.	Abdul Medgid, b. g.	Mr Browne.	Capt. Severne.
1857.	Lobster, b. g.	Viscount St Lawrence.	Capt. Bernard.
1858.	Brandon (late Bull-dog).	Lord St Lawrence.	Capt. Crymes.
1859.	Arab-Maid, gr. m.	Mr. M. Aylmer.	Capt. Crymes.
1860.	Fancy, gr. g.	Lord St Lawrence.	Capt. McCraith.
1861.	Fancy, gr. g.	Lord St Lawrence.	Capt. McCraith.
1862.	Hornpipe, ch. g.	Lord Naas.	Mr Peel.
1863.	Fusee, b. g.	Mr Tinte.	Mr Thomas.
1864.	Andrew, b. g.	Mr C. Rynd.	Mr Long.
1865.	Blood Royal, ch. h.	Mr M. Aylmer.	Mr Lawrence.
1866.	Charlie, b. g.	Capt. Beresford.	Capt. Smith.
1867.	Light Heart, b. g.	Capt. Rose.	Mr G. Knox.
1868.	The Cardinal, b. g.	Capt. Forster.	Capt. Smith.
1869.	Norton, b. g.	Mr Crosby.	Capt. Clayton.
1870.	Giraffe, b. g.	Mr Crosby.	Capt. Holroid.
1871.	Dagmir, ch. m.	Mr Meredith	Mr R. Meredith.

* No races for the Kildare Cup in 1839, 1840, or 1846.



PUNCHESTOWN 1868.
Original in possession of Lt. Col. E. J. Tickell, D.S.O.

MR O'CONNOR HENCHY, 1846-1847

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Horse.</i>	<i>Owner.</i>	<i>Rider.</i>
1872.	Susanne.	Lord St Lawrence.	Capt. Smith.
1873.	Confederate, b. g.	Capt. Tuthill.	Mr St James.
1874.	Confederate, b. g.	Capt. Tuthill.	Mr St James.
1875.	Confederate, b. g.	Capt. Tuthill.	Mr St James.
1876.	Snowstorm, gr. g.	Mr W. Blacker.	Owner.
1877.	McMahon, b. g.	Capt. R. Cosby.	Capt. Troake.
1878.	Ærolite, ch. g.	Mr W. Blacker.	Capt. Smith.
1879.	The Parson, b. g.	Lord Cloncurry.	Owner.
1880.	Brunette, b. m.	Mr F. Blacker.	Owner.
1881.	Harkaway, b. g.	Mr D. Moore O'Ferrall.	Mr W. M. Long- field.
1882.	No Meeting held.		
1883.	Brunette, br. m.	Mr F. Blacker.	Owner.
1884.	Brunette, br. m.	Mr F. Blacker.	Capt. W. B. Mor- ris
1885.	Nancy, br. m.	Baron de Robeck.	Mr H. de Robeck.
1886.	Mountjoy.	Mr B. Daly.	Mr Barton.
1887.	Mountjoy.	Mr B. Daly.	Mr Barton.
1888.	Muckross.	Mr Williams.	Owner.
1889.	Trojan.	Col. G. H. Gough.	Mr Dewhurst.
1890.	Offaly.	Mr R. Tyrrell.	Mr Wildman.
1891.	Nap.	Col. Crichton.	Mr T. Beasley.
1892.	Nap.	Col. Crichton.	Capt. Dewhurst.
1893.	Brunswicker.	Mr W. F. Vers- choyle.	Mr L. Sheil.
1894.	Grinder.	Mr St J. Cam- bridge.	Mr L. Sheil.
1895.	Sir Hugh.	Mr W. Blacker.	Mr D. G. Camp- bell.
1896.	Poacher.	Capt. Dewhurst.	Owner.
1897.	Clytie.	Mr W. C. Eustis.	Owner.
1898.	Young Spark.	Lady Hesketh.	Capt. Dewhurst.
1899.	Mayfly. } (Dead Victory. } Heat.)	Col. de Robeck.	Owner.
1900.	Young Spark.	Mr T. G. Gordon.	Mr Peel.
1901.	Earthworm.	Lady Hesketh.	Capt. Dewhurst.
1902.	Earthworm.	Mr E. Lucas.	Owner.
1903.	Good Example.	Mr H. Whitworth.	Mr E. Bellaney.
		Lady Milbanke.	Capt. Hankey.

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Horse.</i>	<i>Owner.</i>	<i>Rider.</i>
1904.	Killure.	Mr H. Whitworth.	Owner.
1905.	Red Ocean.	Major Honner.	Capt. H. C. Higgin.
1906.	Prince Henry.	Mr H. Whitworth.	Mr Persse.
1907.	Athgarvan.	Mr W. Watson.	Capt. W. Pallin.
1908.	Prince Henry.	Mr H. Whitworth.	Owner.
1909.	St Columbas.	Mr H. Beasley.	Owner.
1910.	St Columbas.	Mr H. Beasley.	Owner.
1911.	Lord Charles.	Capt. H. Dixon.	Hon. E. B. Bingham.
1912.	Bruce Hall.	Mr T. J. Burrowes.	Hon. H. C. Alexander.
1913.	Lord Charles.	Capt. H. Dixon.	Mr L. L. Firth.



MR. WM. KENNEDY, M.F.H. 1847-1854.

CHAPTER VII

MR WILLIAM KENNEDY, 1847-1854

THE tradition of a Kildare man as Master of the Kildare Hounds was continued by the acceptance of the Mastership on Mr Henchy's retirement by Mr William Kennedy, Sir John Kennedy's second son, and brother to Mr Robert Kennedy, whose recollections are so invaluable to me.

Mr Kennedy was already well known in the Kildare country as a famous rider both to hounds and as an amateur jockey, and it was no surprise to Kildare men that the success as Master which had had been so marked in the case of Sir John Kennedy was repeated by his son. I personally rejoice in one other trait of the Kennedy family, that of keeping a diary of their fox-hunting. Mr Wm Kennedy followed his father's footsteps in that commendable habit, and by the kindness of his daughter, Miss Kennedy, of Colathampton, who has been so good as to place his notes at my disposal, I

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

am able to gather a very definite idea of the sport enjoyed in Kildare during the period we have reached.

Mr Kennedy hunted his own hounds, and from a note at the beginning of one of his diaries I gather they consisted of forty couples. The diary itself extends from the autumn of 1848 to the spring of 1853 and is fairly complete throughout, while during the last two seasons, those of 1851-2 and 1852-3, the record of no single day is omitted. During these seasons indeed it is a counterpart of the historic diary of Sir John, for it contains mention of every covert drawn, fox found, lost and killed. It is obvious that this will enable us to make an interesting comparison between the sport of Kildare during two succeeding generations.

Sport in 1848-9 was undoubtedly good. Here, for instance, is the record of a day's hunting in December.

“ Ran from Kerdiffstown through Palmerstown under Furness and killed near Arthurstown, a good hunting run, one hour and five minutes. Ran from Kill Hill through Johnstown over Collierstown and earthed between Coolmine and Castlebaggot, a first rate run of one hour and a quarter.”

An entry of the 12th of the same month would seem to show that there was only a gradual trans-

MR WILLIAM KENNEDY, 1847-1854

ference of the Mastership from Mr Henchy to Mr Kennedy, and that during that season at least there was a joint arrangement between the two gentlemen, for one sees them both in the field and each apparently in a position of authority.

“ Ran from Three Castles first rate pace, within a field of Punchbowl, fox then turned, and lost in Collierstown. Chopped a fox in Punchbowl, and another broke with two hounds, which Henchy, like a muff, followed to Downshire, and consequently spoiled the run. A good day's sport.”

“ Decr. 29th. Scent excellent; day's sport first rate ” is another cheerful entry.

A typical day of the spring hunting was that recorded of February 29, 1849.

“ Ran a fox for two hours from Baltiboys through Tulfaris and Russborough plantations and killed him in Baltiboys near to the covert. The hounds worked exceedingly well. Ran from Three Castles an excellent run of 35 minutes to the top of Sorrel Hill, when we succeeded in taking off the hounds. The hounds worked exceedingly well.”

There appears to have followed a period of bad scenting. There is a continued record during the seasons of 1849, 1850, 1851 of a plenty of foxes but of a difficulty in killing them owing to a lack of scenting weather. “ Scent very bad.” “ A very bad scent

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

and could not hunt a yard," and such like dolorous remarks occur on almost every page of the diary. A better day was November 25, 1850.

"Ran from Coolmine towards Lyons and back, then towards Gowchers and back. Then got on another fox ran across Lynams along the mountains towards Dublin, and killed after a splendid hunting run of more than two hours, not including the rings." In December of 1850 is a record, rare in Kildare at that day. "In consequence of there being a crowd of people at every covert (St Stephen's Day), we did not find a fox."

The year 1851 opened with a good run, though apparently with a change of foxes.

"Jan 2. Ran from Three Castles very fast to Downshire, through the park to Eadstown; through Eadstown to Forenaughts; back to Eadstown when we got on a fresh fox which we ran to Elverstown, when I whipped off the hounds. Horses all beat. A fine run of two hours and four minutes." Here on the 11th of the same month is the record of sport of a different quality.

"Ran from Kill close to Mongans, then by Castlewarden to Lyons in 17 minutes. Fox dead beat, when we got on another fox. Ran from Punchbowl towards Three Castles, fox then turned and hounds ran him at a tremendous pace to ground between Arthurstown and Killeel; 20 minutes. Such good sport never was known. W. K."

MR WILLIAM KENNEDY, 1847-1854

"Too many foxes" is an entry of January 23, after another record of frequent changes and long but ringing runs. "Staked my poor old mare Sweetpea" is a tragic remark in February.

Scent was bad again for some weeks in the spring of 1851. "Bad scenting weather; too dry." "The scent was so bad we left fox in the covert," I read. There is a pleasing variety in an entry of February 27.

"Ran capital pace from Curragh to ground near Hillsborough. I was nearly drowned in the Liffey."

Just three weeks later I find a remark of a similar flavour.

"Ran from Levittstown to the Barrow and back to Covert again, across the Barrow and killed at Archdeacon Trench's. Tom Conolly nearly drowned swimming the river."

The season finished well in the first week in April.

"Ran from Ardrass to Castletown from Lyons to ground in Athgoe. Ran from Kill Hill through Bishops court by Johnstown through Mongans land to ground in Punchbowl; very good thirty-five minutes." Such was the hunting on the first of the month. On the 3rd they

"Ran from Dunstown to Hollywood a good 40 minutes. Ran from Killashee close to Eadstown to ground in Downshire 45 minutes. Excellent day's sport." Two days later, April 5,

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“ Ran three times from Three Castles to Kilbride and back, and after hunting the fox three hours killed in the open.”

Finally, on April 10,

“ Ran from Kerdiffstown very fast to ground in Furnace. Ran from Eadstown close to Forenaughts then to ground in Giltown. So ends a good season.”

There was still no lack of foxes in the autumn hunting of 1851. Thus in October of that year is an entry.

“ 17th. Killed two foxes in Tallaght Hill Covert. Ran two foxes to ground in Coolmine Court, another into the glen and back again; foxes in all directions.” Sport, however, continued good. Here is a record of some exhilarating bursts on December 27:

“ Ran from Devies to ground in six minutes as fast as hounds could go. Ran from Nine Tree Hill to ground near Ballyshannon as good a twenty two minutes as hounds ever went.”

I read an outline of a run on January 22, 1852, which Kildare riders can easily fill out into a moving story.

“ Ran from Giltown close to Coldwells and Cryhelp then close to Copelands; then Whitestown and the fox lay down in the old covert of Castleruddery. We then saw him among the hounds and he beat us to ground. The best run I ever saw; one hour and

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40 minutes from the time we found; one hour and twenty-five minutes from the time the fox left Giltown. First hour and five minutes without a check. Rode Merlin. I shall never see the like again."

There was little more to record that season except what Mr Kennedy describes as a "fine wild hunting run about the hills for 1 hr and 55 minutes" on February 12, from a Rathcoole meet. The season closed with a spell of N.E. winds which made scenting bad and hunting almost impossible. To the severity of these winds and their blighting effect upon sport, Mr Mansfield, looking through the diary many years later, adds his recollection, "Ground too hard for the last three weeks, obliged to give it up," is Mr Kennedy's final remark in the first week of April, 1852.

The autumn of the same year opened with a long spell of the same dry weather and bad scent. "Ground as hard as a bone" records the Master at the beginning of October. On the 19th, however, I read:

"Ran very prettily for 45 minutes in the mountains to ground near Kippure, dug him out, and killed him. Ran from Three Castles first to Kilbride, then Cogans; tried Punchbowl, then close to Downshire, back nearly to Punchbowl and killed in the open close to Three Castles one hour and forty-five minutes; a fine day for the hounds."

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The season continued of much the same quality, bad scent generally, varied by weather which allowed of an occasional good day's sport. As a general rule, however, if the fox got much of a start, the chase was hopeless. "The worst scenting season so far possible," is an entry of November 27. On December 5, however, there was sport.

"Ran from Spratstown through Ballina close to Ballyhook, turned and ran through Saunders Grove and killed on Ballynacrow Hill, a famous run of 1 hr and 40 minutes," and sport continued good for a week.

There is an interesting mention of the famous Laragh Brook under date of January 8, 1853.

"Ran from Laragh very fast to Tattoo, back to Laragh, when I think we changed foxes, and took the hounds off at Tattoo. An enormous field out; two crossed the Laragh Fence." There was a good run from Arthurstown on the 21st "as hard as we could go close to Punchbowl, leaving Rathmore on our left, on to Three Castles. Did not go into the covert, ran the fox a view through Finnamore land across the river. The fox got to the mountain, where the scent died completely away. A fine run and gallant fox." On February 1 they

"Ran from Nine Tree Hill leaving Narraghmore on the left as hard as we could go, through Hatfield to ground at Halverstown. As good a forty minutes as hounds ever ran without a pause." There was

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another good forty-two minutes on the 5th from Mullacash through Dunstown to Kilcullen and across the river to Kinnea, which is the last record of much note during that season.

Major H. L. Ruck Keene, whose father, Colonel E. Ruck Keene, of the Queen's Bays and 15th Hussars, hunted very regularly with the Kildare in the middle years of the last century, has very kindly sent me some extracts from his hunting diary which will enable me to add a few notes of the sport showed by Mr Kennedy. I see from these that there was a pack of harriers at Palmerston, near Dublin, in the 'fifties. Thus,

"Octr. 8th, 1852. Meet at 9th Lock. Had a good scurry with our first hare and lost. Found another, but sporting master preferred a herring, after which we had a grind."

On December 14 of the same year I find: "Bray from Castlemartin; hunted a fox on bad terms from Levitstown into Welsh's gorse and away for a few miles to ground. Found in Moone and ran away very fast for about fifty minutes into Spratstown. From this our fox made a short ring but was dead beat and was killed close to the gorse. A very good run, though not straight."

"On Dec. 21st, 1852, Newron, from Newbridge. Ran our first fox from Laragh a very good fifty minutes over a magnificent country through

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Grange* into Cappagh and to ground. Hunted our second fox from Cappagh for an hour from Donadea, the first twenty minutes very fast and lost near Clane, pitch dark when we finished."

"1853. Jan. 3rd. 18 Mile Stone, from Newbridge. Ran our first fox from Killashee at a good hunting pace for 40 minutes to ground near Naas. From Stonebrook we went quick into Elverstown, and then with a fresh fox over the hill through Downshire and Three Castles across the turnpike road and killed under Tallaght Hill. A fine hunting run of 2 hrs and 35 minutes."

"Jan. 15th. Donadea from Newbridge. Our fox from Nine Tree Hill broke at the far end of the gorse down the hill at the sewer which he found stopped.

"Drew a bog without finding went on to the gorse on the hill and a brace of foxes went away together. We hunted one under the demesne wall across the road and eventually marked him into Rathcoffey where we got on better terms and ran at a good hunting pace across the river near Clane into Turnings from which we ran most likely with a fresh fox across the road and canal into Lyons and lost. A fine hunting run."

"Nover 16th. Newbridge. Dunlavin baker jumped into a pit, at Downshire and broke five ribs and both collar bones."

The autumn of 1853 is an interesting date in the

* Ballycahan.

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annals of the Kildare Hunt from the fact that the late Baron de Robeck, then Major de Robeck, in that season first entered upon that career of sport with the hounds which ended practically only with his death in 1904. Like so many of the Kildare sportsmen, he had the admirable habit of keeping a very full diary. This has been most kindly placed at my disposal by his son the present Baron de Robeck, and I find it a most valuable commentary on the sport shown by many successive Masters of Kildare hounds. It is particularly welcome at this point of my undertaking because it takes up the story where Mr W. Kennedy gets less communicative.

Here is the first entry. "Thursday, Novr. 17th. 1853. The first day's hunting this season; my headquarters Lyons. The meet was Blessington, a very sharp white frost, could not begin work till 12. A large field. Drew Three Castles, soon found and went away, but bad scent; a slow pottering run to Kilbride, there lost. Drew Downshire, found and away like fun to Elverstown about 18 minutes; a short check in the cover, ran to Baltiboys there lost. About 25 minutes."

Major de Robeck's notes generally confirm Mr Kennedy's diary and record little but middling sport during the month. Most of the runs slow and

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“ pottering,” to use the major’s own expression, and everything indicative of bad scenting weather.

“ There was a slow dodging 25 minutes from Milltowns covert ending in a kill at Lady Castle ” on the 22nd, and “ a slow pottering run of about one hour to Mullacash from Dunstown ” on the 24th. The month ended better, however. On the 29th they “ drew Rathcoffey, found and had a sharp 18 minutes to Donadea to ground. Drew Donadea, found, skirted Rathcoffey into Laragh Covert. Here a fresh fox broke away with four or five couple of hounds and we had a sharp burst to Courtown, checked and whipped off. In the meantime the hunted fox was killed in the covert. The run up to Laragh about 1 hr. and 40 minutes. A good day’s sport.”

On December 15, 1853, I find the following.

“ Met at 18 Milestone, very fine day, drew Killashee, soon found, went away fast to Punchestown. Soon rattled him out back to Killashee, on to Herbertstown, checked for a short time, on again through Killashee to Punchestown. This time the hounds were some time routing him out of the cover, but after a bit a fox went away, doubtful if it was the hunted fox or a fresh one, and gave us a slow hunting run to Hillsborough where he went to ground. An excellent day’s sport, the distance run straight about 20 miles; time hunting 3 hours.”

A fortnight’s frost prevented hunting at the

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opening of the new year of 1854, but at the first meet on the 14th with the meet at Newbridge there was good sport.

“Drew Greenhills blank,” records Major de Robeck, “but found at Herbertstown, had a fast run about 20 minutes to Dunstown, checked for a bit, dragged on to Two Mile Chapel close to which went to ground. Drew Punchestown, found, and away fast through old Killashee on towards Herbertstown when turned sharp to left through Killashee cover, on past Palmerstown, turned to right through Killashee, across Naas road by Rathasker to Canal, along Canal close to Naas, turned to right (getting dark) across Naas road and last seen of them as if making for Killashee. Only a few hounds, all the rest beaten off, and nobody with them. Up to leaving the canal, Allen, W. Kennedy, Naas and self were with them. Shortly after that I was thrown out. A splendid hunting run, at times very fast. Three hours at least.”

At the end of the month, that is January 28, 1854, Major de Robeck records another excellent day.

“Met at Bray, drew Dollardstown, found, had a short scurry and lost. Drew Welsh’s covert blank. Drew Moone, found, went away fast to Wilson’s covert, a short check and on to Knockrow, close to Burton Hall; turned, skirted Castle Dermot, and on to Welsh’s covert, where we killed after one of the finest runs that could be seen. Time altogether two

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hours and twenty minutes; the first hour and twenty minutes very fast."

From the record of February I select the following:

" 16th Feb. A good hunting run of one hour and twenty minutes from Three Castles. Fast to Punchbowl, back over the mountains as if for Kilbride, then headed for Three Castles and ran into him in a bit of a cover close by. Drew Downshire, found, went away fast towards Eadstown; slow hunting across Blessington Road towards the mountains, then headed for Three Castles; checked for a short time at the covert, rattled him out of it and away fast across the bog as if for Downshire, but turned and ran into him in a garden at Blessington. A very long hunting run of upwards of two hours. Horses very much beaten."

The tale of good sport continues throughout February, though there is a remark of the major's, "went away for two or three fields and lost as usual," which seems to hint at some defect in the huntsman. On the 25th, "Found and went away fast from Castle Kelly to Donore and on for Killybegs, turned, crossed the Liffey close to Millicent and lost, a famous run of 1 hour and 25 minutes. The fox was dead beat and close before the hounds. Supposed he was drowned."

There is no doubt indeed that Mr Kennedy

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showed most excellent sport through this, his last season. I note that on March 11 a fox baffled the hounds during no less than two and a quarter hours at Arthurstown, but when he did break he gave them a fast forty minutes to ground at the back of Johnstown. On the 17th (St Patrick's Day) with the meet at 18 Milestone and a great crowd of spectators and a large field, who, as the major records, "wanted to hunt the fox themselves." They drew Mullacash blank, but on leaving the covert "got on a travelling fox, the hounds went very fast, scarcely any of the field with them, straight for Punchestown, passed it, turned for Killashee, through the covert, on through Beggars End to Punchestown, where lost. Could not account for the fox."

In Mr Kennedy's own diary is a laconic note of the accident which ended his Mastership. "March 23rd, 1854. Came to grief. Hounds did not hunt again, as I was dangerously ill, and my death daily expected." I may perhaps quote Major de Robeck's account of Mr Kennedy's misfortune. The meet was at Straffan, and after drawing Lady Castle and Turnings blank they "dragged on close to Baronrath, where at an ugly up jump W. Kennedy's horse fell back hurting W. K. very much; ribs broke, and lungs dangerously injured. I went off sharp to Rathcoole for the doctor.

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W. K. was taken to Bob K's* house." On the 29th I read, "Up to the present W. K. is making little progress."

Mr Kennedy happily recovered, but did not again hunt the hounds. More than twenty years later he happened to look through these old diaries, and very fortunately added some memories which the perusal of them evoked. I cannot do better than give in his own words his recollection of an extraordinary run, which is the occasion of only the briefest mention in the diary, a fact which makes one regret the habit of famous sportsmen to make such scanty record of their experiences even when they make record at all.

"I sit down," wrote Mr Kennedy in 1878, "to write an account of the best run I ever saw or heard of, because it proves the wonderful stoutness and goodness of the hounds of those days, and because it was the only run I ever saw that no horse that ever was foaled could have lived through.

"The meet was Eighteen Mile Stone, Jan. 4th, 1853, and we first drew Mullacash and I see by my book we 'ran through Killashee to ground near Naas, a good run.'

"Of it I recollect nothing, but I well remember what followed. At Stonebrook we found and ran as hard as possible to Elverstown all over grass and all uphill, so that every horse was blown. I there

* His brother Mr Robert Kennedy.

got off Sweetpea and got on my fresh horse Merlin, a thoroughbred horse by Birdcatcher out of the Slipper. A fox there broke at the top of the cover, and as I was some time getting the hounds out, we were unable to run him very fast to Downshire. I there took the hounds in hand, carried them round the covert, and at once went away as hard as we could go close to Punchbowl; into it the fox did not go, but turned up the hill across Cogans, which was then an unenclosed hill without plantations, and across the highroad close to Kilbride; then ran along the valley leaving the ponds at Brittas on our left. There the fox was viewed by the hounds, but on he went and fortunately I got into a road, and was able to keep them in sight.

“After galloping half a mile, I went through a gate and found my hounds clustered in the ruins of an old cottage at Lynams near Tallaght Hill covert, which our gallant fox was making for; but they had not their fox as yet, and I did not know what had become of him. From the cottage there was a ditch filled with furze. Thinking the fox might have crawled into it, I jumped off my poor tired horse, and quietly got a few hounds to try if he was there. Just as I did so I joyfully heard a grumble, and saw the fox was dead. He had been lying on the top of the wall and tumbled down among them exhausted.

“From the time I turned up the hill from Punchbowl no one knew where the hounds had gone to, and my brother Edward was the first person I met on my way home, and to him I gave the fox’s head.

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This run was not at the time so much spoken of as others, because no one was able to see it, having only one horse. We found twenty four English miles from Dublin, and killed nine. Of course we changed foxes, I think twice. The run lasted two hours and ten minutes and there was never a run in which the hounds better proved their extraordinary stoutness and goodness, as it was only by changing foxes that their stoutness could be so decidedly proved, as no one fox could have lived so long before them. No wonder poor Willie La Touche was so fond of them."

Mr Kennedy in talking of this run afterwards invariably concluded the story by saying, "I take no credit, it was all due to Willie La Touche's hounds."

This memorandum of Mr Kennedy's makes one regret that he did not put pen to paper oftener and at more length. I must, however, be grateful for what he has left us, and I bring my notes of his Mastership to a close by a summary of the sport recorded in the two completely described seasons of 1852-3 and 1853-4, by which it is possible to compare the results of his hunting with those of the career of his distinguished father, Sir John.

It seems to me that these were practically the same. Sir John on an average hunted fifty-two days in the season, during which he found an

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average of 114 foxes and killed 35. In the seasons of 1853-4, in which the number of days' hunting was practically the same, viz. 53, Mr Kennedy found 112 foxes and killed 27.

In the previous but longer season of 1852-3, in which hounds were out 72 days, there were 150 foxes found and 51 killed. The finds in this case were not quite equal to Sir John's average, but the proportion of kills to finds slightly better. It must be remembered, however, that Sir John found the country very ill provided with coverts, and left it excellently furnished in that all-important respect, and that his son consequently benefited by a permanent improvement, which was only gradual during his father's Mastership, and at the first non-existent.

I cannot better conclude this chapter than by quoting an eulogy of Mr Wm La Touche's care of the breeding and training of the hounds which continued through Mr Kennedy's term and long after, and which that gentleman put upon record when looking through the diary and recalling the stoutness of the pack so convincingly shown by their endurance in the historic run of which he gave so graphic an account.

“ With such hounds as he provided, it was easy for me to account for my foxes; one whole day

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of every week of his life he spent in the kennel. What he spent in buying sire hounds, or sending others to England, I do not know, but I do know that he never allowed me to contribute one farthing and he bred so successfully that I well recollect after keeping all the hounds we required in one year, we sent away three drafts to different packs in Ireland. No Master of hounds ever enjoyed my advantages, and such a lover of hounds as Wm La Touche we shall never see again, and it is now we know his loss. *Requiescat in pace.*"



THE EARL OF CLONMELL, M.F.H. 1854-1857.

CHAPTER VIII

LORD CLONMELL, 1854-1857

THERE was a letter dated from Palmerstown on April 21, 1854, addressed to members of the Kildare Hunt, and signed by a committee of five, which sets forth very fully the position of the Hunt at that date, upon the resignation of Mr Wm Kennedy.

Palmerstown

Naas.

April 21st, 1854.

Sir,

We beg to enclose you a list of the present Subscribers to the Kildare Hunt.

By Mr Kennedy's statement, which was laid before the meeting on Wednesday last, it appears that the income of the Club (including field money) will be about £1,150; the Expenditure, (including some proposed reductions) will be about £1,350, leaving a deficit of £200 a year. The Committee are therefore anxious to know whether, under these circumstances, you will kindly increase your sub-

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scription, as we do not feel justified in recommending any gentleman to undertake the Mastership of the Hounds, who would be subject to so serious a loss.

The favour of an answer is most earnestly requested before Thursday next, when the Committee will again meet, directed to Robert Kennedy Esqr., Baronrath, Straffan.

We remain,

Your obedient servants,

CLONMELL,

NAAS,

HENRY CARROLL,

PRATT TYNTE,

ROBERT KENNEDY.

It is certain that the required increase in the subscription was forthcoming, for Lord Clonmell opened the autumn season of 1854 as Master of the Kildare Hounds.

I am again fortunate in being able to turn to Major de Robeck's diary for a detailed account of the sport shown by Lord Clonmell. Following the usual practice he began the season of 1854 with a meet at Johnstown Inn on November 7, and from the diary I gather there was a typical first day's sport, good enough for the horses, it seems, who, the Baron says, were "all in a bad way." They found at Kerdiffstown and ran as is so often the case into

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Palmerstown, where they killed. Then they had a sharp ten minutes from Castle Keely to ground, followed by a find at Mansfield cover and "a nice little scurry."

The first fair day's sport was on the 14th, when they found at Ballintagart, went away fast to Hatfield, on to Lochatrina, by Grange Bog and to Moore Hill, where the fox was lost after a very good run. Sport continued good through the month. On the 16th, a Thursday, after drawing Harbordstown, Dunstown and Mullacash, all blank, they found at Punchestown and went away fast to Eadstown at a great pace where they checked for a few minutes. They then worked round to Mullacash and on to Stonebrook, where the hounds killed after a fast and good run of one hour and twenty minutes. On the 21st, again, with the meet at Blessington, and after some pottering work at Three Castles, Downshire and Eadstown, they came on a fox in a patch of gorse on Newtown snipe bog, ran to Eadstown, through the cover and on to Downshire, a good fast run ending in a loss in the dark. There was a foretaste of that dreadful Crimean winter of 1855 at the end of the month, when hunting was stopped by frost and snow for a week, but on the 30th a good fox went away from Bellavilla and straight to Turnings at a very fast pace, and took the hounds across the Liffey, then

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in high flood from the thaw, two ardent sportsmen at least swimming the river. Sport continued only moderate during December, but on the 30th there was another good run from Bellavilla, ending in losing the fox in the dark after a run of one hour and a quarter at a great pace, at a spot not named in the Major's diary.

On January 2, 1855, the major was much disgusted at the Master calling off the hounds at so early an hour as 2 o'clock, after a bad morning's sport, at Welsh's cover, Moone, and Nine Tree Hill, where they at length found and ran through Narraghmore Wood, only to lose in the bog. A curious day, Saturday, January 6, is best described in the major's own words:

“ Met at Rathcoole, drew Castlebagot, found, went away fast for about a mile and a half and ran to ground. Drew Lyons, chopped a mangy fox. Drew Arthurstown, found, and after some time some of the hounds came out of cover and went like fun for a couple of fields. No fox was seen to go away, could not account for it. Drew Kilteel, found, chopped one fox, another went away and there was a good run of forty minutes. The hounds up to Punchbowl ran away clean from everybody, there they checked for a minute or two and on again in the direction of Downshire and ran to ground not far from there.”

Hunting was again stopped by frost in the middle

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of the month, and when the thaw came it afforded only a few days hunting, mostly pottering work with no sport, chopped foxes and short rings from Harbordstown, Kilcullen and Giltown. But on Sunday, January 21, set in that dreadful weather of 1855 which wrought such havoc in the Crimea and all hunting was stopped, as it proved, for the rest of the season. Heavy snow followed the frost on the 31st and continued without cessation for two days, after which no traffic could be got across the Kildare roads. Even the trains ran with the greatest difficulty. A slight thaw on February 3 gave some promise of relief, but frost and snow returned on the 5th and continued till the 24th. "So severe a frost and such deep snow," writes Major de Robeck, "have not been known since the year 1814, in fact the roads were only passable in places on the 3rd March." On the same date, March 3rd, I read "The Emperor of Russia dead," a laconic record of the dramatic end of that monarch who trusted in "Generals Janvier et Fevrier" and himself fell a victim to their discipline.

The autumn season opened with sadly diminished prospects of sport, owing to the devastation wrought by the frost upon the coverts. This I examine in some detail later on. Meanwhile the first meet of the season at Johnstown Inn on November 1 was again quite typical. A find in Ker-

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diffistown and to ground in Palmerstown. Another find at Arthurstown, through Eadstown twice with the same result, to ground after a short run. Sport for the first fortnight presented no feature of interest, but on the 15th I read, "Drew Ballyhook blank; chopped in Whitestown, ditto in Tynte Park; found in Coldwells, good run to Hatfield, where the hounds separated, most of them following up their fox and killing him at Ballintaggart. The remainder dragged on a fox slowly to Giltown. I was well carried on Blueskin; jumped a tremendous wall on Allen's farm."

I gather that the hunting was more or less featureless during the remainder of the season, doubtless from the cause I have named. Also the major was engaged in the courtship which ended in his marriage, and as a consequence was a little less concerned with the hunting than usual. There is, in fact, no further record of sport until March 6, when from Rathcoole there was a long checking run from Coolmine to the mountains ending in a kill near Kilbride. There was a similar day from a Blessington meet in the same country on the 13th. No sport at all on the 15th from Newcastle. On March 26, after a great deal of pottering work round Bishops court, they found late in the day at Eadstown and had a fine thirty minutes to old Kennel Hill, Ballymore Road to ground.

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In the autumn of the same year the major again fails us. On September 30 he lost his father, Baron de Robeck, in very tragic circumstances. That gentleman, who was of advanced age and a little infirm, was then living on his estate at Leixlip Castle. The Liffey, which there runs over a succession of ledges called the Salmon Leap, was in very high flood, and the Baron had twice walked through the grounds with his son to look at the falls, which were exceptionally striking at that moment. He expressed a wish to go a third time, but was dissuaded by his son on account of the dampness of the evening. But late in the afternoon he left the drawing-room by the French window which opens on the lawn of the castle, and a little later was seen by a girl from the opposite side of the river looking at the falls for several minutes. She then saw him turn away to ascend the steep bank and disappear in a clump of bushes. His son had assisted him up this bank before. It is supposed that in his feeble state of health he slipped back and rolled down the bank into the river. In any case he was not seen alive again, and was found dead in the river eleven days later near Lucan. Major de Robeck's succession of course interfered with hunting, and I find no further record of Kildare sport during Lord Clonmell's Mastership.

I find one or two letters of this period which I

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may set out as of some slight interest. Dr Reuchan, the principal of Maynooth College, thus writes to Lord Clonmell.

On July 8, 1854.

“ Dr. Reuchan presents his compliments to the Earl of Clonmell and begs to inform him that the sewer about which he spoke to the College Porter a few days ago shall be secured with bars, so as not to be available for ‘ Reynard ’ as a refuge, nor likely to spoil another day’s sport.”

Here, too, is a letter from Stephen Goodall, dated from the Belvoir Kennels at Grantham on July 26, 1854.

“ My Lord,

I beg to tell your lordship that I expect to be home on Monday or Tuesday next if I possibly can. My brother has prevailed on me to go to the Quorn that I might get a couple of hounds to bring over, which will, I have no doubt, do me a great deal of good if I get them. I saw the whole of his hounds my brother has care of, and I think I never saw such a lot in my life.”

I may add a sketch of that admirable huntsman Goodall as he appeared at this time to Mr O’Connor Morris, the well-known writer on sport, whose articles, signed “ Triviata,” attracted much attention during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

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“ In Kildare my memory carries me back to Stephen Goodall, who hunted the hounds during the Mastership of Lords Clonmell and Mayo. A tall hatchet-faced man sitting on his horse like a pair of tongs intent upon what his hounds were doing and little else. His riding looked automatic, if I may use the term, horse and man being for the moment machines in connection with the pack. Both Masters mounted him well, and he well deserved the best that money and judgment could buy, as he hardly deviated from the direct line, and his hunters seemed one and all to sympathise with him, though he hardly touched their heads.”

Finally, the following letter on the state of one part of the country in 1854 may have a present interest. Mr J. H. Laugh wrote to Lord Clonmell from Garisher, Enfield in July of that year regarding the Blackwater covert, which, apparently, the Kildare Hunt had neglected and were now taking back again, the owner being Mr O’Ferrall.

“ I do not think there is any chance of re-establishing this country including Ballina, Balindolan, Rahan and this place as a bleeding country; the proprietors seem disinclined to have it so, and I do not think with all the country you have that it would be worth while. If I can be of any service in your arrangements for this district, you can command me.”

No account of the Kildare Hunt would be com-

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plete without a reference, however slight, to the sporting farmers, who have always been a prominent feature in a typical Kildare field, and I choose this, a middle period of our history, for an attempt to recall one or two notable personalities of the Kildare country. Most Kildare sportsmen who have ridden with the hounds even for a few seasons will remember one or more of the fraternity; those whose memory go back further will call to mind a score. Rodey Miley of Timolin, Wilvern of Ballintaggart, Joe Kilbey of Cannycourt, Hanway of Laragh, Laurence Malone of Brogues-town, Hefferman of Kildare, Warers of Kilfat, W. Walters of Kilpatrick, Raferty of Ballintore; who does not remember one or other of these in every good run he can call back from the past? It was Rodey Miley who rode a wonderful horse he called "The Protestant Church," because, as he said, nothing could throw him down. Allen of Logatrina was another sporting farmer, who was often accompanied by his wife. Joe Kilbey of Canycourt was, perhaps, the best rider of them all. He was a heavy weight, but a brave and accomplished horseman, and always watched hounds, which is more than can be said for some of them.

But the typical Irish sporting farmer was William Hanway, who during a long life occupied a small farm near the famous Laragh covert, and whose

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father indeed was earthstopper at that covert. Hanway died at the age of near seventy in 1902, after having been a prominent follower of the hounds under every Master of the preceding half century.

To any who had seen Hanway, either in the field or at any other of his famous performances over the innumerable steeplechase courses he frequented in every part of Ireland it was little short of a miracle that he died from a heart attack in his bed. As it was, Hanway at one time or another had broken most of the bones in his body. And yet he retained a youthful appearance and a youthful vigour to the end of his life, which deceived all who had not watched his career as to his real age and enabled him to ride a point-to-point race in the very year of his death.

Nominally William was a farmer, and his family, I believe, still occupy his holding; his own tenancy was broken by more than one eviction. But William's farming was only that of the amateur; his real vocation had nothing to do with anything but horses and hounds and such business or diversion as could be got out of both in hunting, racing, dealing and betting.

Such a character is very dear to the Irish heart, and William's popularity with the Irish peasant to whom he was a hero is embalmed in the phrase

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by which he was known among them, "the bould Hanaway." Nothing ever daunted William. He met all the troubles resulting from his thriftless farming, his dare-devil recklessness in riding, and a persistent ill-luck in his racing affairs with a smiling face, and this courage, combined with a priceless sense of humour, which enabled him to see fun in the worst of his misfortunes, enabled him to preserve a youthful spirit to the end of his life.

Hanway was constantly to be seen with the Kildare hounds but seldom on the same mount, for he was usually making some rough youngster into a hunter by the process of killing or curing. But his fame with the country people rests more on his performance as a steeple chaserider. He was the hero of most of the farmers' races and open entries in Ireland for nearly half a century. No one knew where he got his horses, some no doubt were bought for a few pounds, some may have been the property of others. In any case, he always found plenty of horses to hunt, and he was ever to be reckoned with in the sportsmen's races for the Kildare farmers, which he practically farmed himself. He was almost as well known in such events at Punchestown, the Ward Hunt meeting at Fairy House, and was a popular hero on other steeplechase courses all over the island.

Many of his mounts had most of the vices

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peculiar to horseflesh; some of them were rogues, but all such as survived his discipline galloped, and all had to jump. In one year in the 'eighties of the last century, he possessed four smashers at one time. He killed three of the four in the process of training, and with the worst, which, in order to satisfy a grudge against a pious acquaintance who objected to racing, he named "John Kane," he won the Conyngham Cup at Punchestown, the blue ribbon of Irish steeplechasing.

It is a mystery to all who knew him how any colt ever survived his methods of schooling. Long ropes and small fences he disdained from the beginning and rode the colts from the first over every kind of fence that presented itself, often with a whole parish of men and boys with sticks behind him. Little wonder that in such a process Hanway broke the backs or legs of a great number and converted such as survived into first-rate fencers. As I have said, many of his own bones were broken by the same discipline. But he invariably came up smiling, and while his bones were knitting he kept his mounts fit by turning them out and having them chased by dogs.

In many aspects, William Hanway was the soul of honour. If he once gave his word he could be relied upon. This was so well understood that the bailiffs, who more than seized his horses on the

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eve of a race meeting, allowed the horses to run on his undertaking, later fulfilled, to restore them to their keeping after the race.

I have mentioned his ill-luck. He was constantly killing good horses, disasters due in part, no doubt, to his methods of training and riding, but Fate was surely against him when, after winning the £300 race at Punchestown, he was disqualified because his horse, "The Sinner," had been in the forfeit list for 30s. before he had owned him. He killed Hortland Chief at a jumping competition at Naas, a handsome chestnut, upon which he once won a race when he was so weak with influenza that the doctor had forbidden him even to attend the meeting lest it might kill him.

Many stories of his sayings and doings in the hunting field are still current in Kildare. He was at a meet once in an unusually impressive costume, but left after hounds had been running for an hour or so. About one o'clock they took their fox on to a road just as a funeral was passing. On the box of the first mourning coach was Hanway with a long black overcoat over his breeches and boots, and wearing a silk hat and hatband. A well-known member of the Hunt said, "What are you doing there, Hanway, I thought you were with us." "I'm doing my duty to an old friend," was the reply, "as I hope to do my duty to all my friends, including you, sir."

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Hanway was on foot once when the Laragh covert near his house was being drawn, and a young soldier failed to get over the Laragh brook, one of the most formidable obstacles in the Kildare country. Hanway helped him to get his horse to dry land, and the sportsman, taking him for an ordinary peasant, told him to trot him down the field to see if he was lame. William promptly threw the reins over the horse's head, gave him a cut on the haunches with his stick, and as he galloped off remarked, "Your horse appears perfectly sound, sir, and the next time you fall into the Laragh brook I hope you'll have better manners."

One more story must conclude the list. Hanway was riding to covert with Captain —— and when the conversation flagged the latter said, "By the way, Hanway, when are you going to pay me for that horse I sold to you five years ago?" "Captain ——," was the reply, "I came out hunting to hunt and not to talk business."

There was little of the typical Irish farmer in Hanway's bearing and conversation; he spoke indeed, and wrote in a very lofty style, and was much given to classical quotation, more or less accurate and apposite. His manners and address, too, were as a rule, suavity itself. "He deplored the exodus which removed Mr —— from the chase" in bidding farewell to a sportsman leaving the

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country. Here, too, is a specimen of his epistolary style, a letter of congratulation to one of the Masters of the Kildare on his taking the hounds.

Sir,

There is not another man in the county wishes you with more sincerity "Success in the Mastership of the Kildare Hounds," to which all recent concerns plainly point. The office is certainly no sinecure, and — must have had marvellous energy to continue, and with marked success, so many years at the helm.

For a great number of years I firmly held, and still hold, that many gifts were a *sine qua non*. First of all a taste, no, a raging passion for the sport, an untiring perseverance, a fair if not commanding executive power to be jealously guarded, yet judiciously used; while now, and in the future, as every day is making it more desirable, will I say, a superabundance of the *suaviter in modo*, to cope with the growing exigencies of times and tempers.

Unmistakeably nature has supplied all the essential materials, and although not a prophet, I venture to predict a long and successful regime. Permit me to add I indulge the well grounded hope that your popularity and success will be equalled only by the records, traditional and others, of a former master, whom you must know.

I am,

Your very obedient servant,

WILLIAM HANWAY.

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To a friend who asked him for one of his hats shortly after he had been evicted from his farm he wrote:

Dear Sir,

I have to thank you for thinking there was such a man alive.

In truth I will send you the hat, a tall one, the "Baron" by "Blood Royal" carried last spring twenty one years, when he won the Kildare Sportsmen at Boston; also the cap carried by Emerald Isle alas in my juvenile and happy days.

As I have no address, I must go hunt them up among the neighbours, who have a big distribution of bridles, saddles, children, tables, chairs, old racing plates, etc., all mixed, and *hoc genus omne*.

For goodness' sake don't give any of your friends my present address.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM HANWAY.

P.S. I enclose one of the curiosities of the past.

Hanway was the last of a numerous group of sporting farmers of his own generation; as he once said nearly at the end of his life, "A lot of us used to come out, but drink killed all but me."

Apart from men of this class, sportsmen to the core, who were naturally devoted to the sport and

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helpful in every way to the interests of the Hunt, the Kildare masters have always managed to keep on good terms with the general body of farmers and country people who have never ridden to hounds. The Irish peasant is always a sportsman and delights as much in a meet and the chance sight of a good hunt as any member of the Hunt itself. No such enthusiasm among the onlookers is known elsewhere than in Ireland, an enthusiasm which is always marked with the national love of emphasis, and generally with a good measure of the national sense of humour. I once asked a labourer which way the fox had gone. "Over there, me Lord," he replied, pointing towards the bog of Allen, "into a counthry that 'ud drown a snhipe." A young officer hunting from Dublin who had come to grief in a deep ditch and was seen emerging up over the edge covered with clay suggested the remark to a bystander, "Sure, you'll be aisy buried." Mr Robert Kennedy remembers many engaging experiences of the Irish countryman. "Now, Mr Kennedy, would you like your land ridden over in the middle of April?" said a man in the road. "Indeed I would not," replied Mr Kennedy. "Then I wonder at your riding over other people's land." "I'm much obliged to you. Shake hands. As long as I live I will never hunt again in April." Mr Kennedy has kept his word



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from that day, and it seems difficult to imagine a lesson more gently taught.

Before that, however, there was a complaint of the same sort which nevertheless was made with all good humour. "Shame, shame!" cried a man sitting on a fence, "ye're riding over wheat." "I beg your pardon, I'm very sorry, I'll go back," said the sportsman. "No, go on, now ye're there and welcome," replied the aggrieved farmer. "That's Mr Kinnidy," remarked a friend, also sitting on the fence, "and divil a wan bit is he sorry. Why he'd lep into your parlour."

No story of the Kildare Hunt would be complete without a mention of the earthstoppers, of whom there has always been a small regiment employed. They are, of course, an important body, and upon their diligence and loyalty much of the success of the hunting depends. I find periodical lists of these worthies giving their names and the covers they watched at different periods of the Hunt's history. A typical list would contain the names of some eighty or a hundred. They are selected from the most trustworthy cottagers living near the earths or coverts; often from the hinds whose work keeps them actually on the land they have to watch, and in some cases the list includes a few women. Here again Mr Robert Kennedy's recollections are invaluable. He remembers the

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chief of them during sixty years. Bryan Flanagan of Downshire was famous during Sir John Kennedy's time, and was naturally *laudator temporis acti*. In later years, when Mr Robert would tell him of the modern brilliant runs, he would contend that the foxes had deteriorated, because Sir John would hunt a Downshire fox for hours and lose him in the end. Bryan had ignored altogether the improvement in speed and endurance brought to the pack by such breeding as practised by Mr Wm La Touche, while the foxes had naturally stood still.

Paddy Keogh was another famous earthstopper of the earlier *regime* who watched over the interests of the Hunt at the Punchbowl Covert. On one occasion, when the hounds were going to draw the covert, a tremendous hornblowing was heard coming from out the gorse. Mr Kennedy rode on to ascertain the cause of the clamour. He found Paddy walking all round the covert and blowing a cow's horn with all his lung power. "What on earth are you doing?" asked Mr Kennedy. "Your soul to Glory, I'm waking me foxes," was the reply.

One year Paddy had no foxes, and some one gave him a fox that he had bought from Dycer's the then Sewell's of Dublin. That fox found out every hole within a mile of the covert and always managed to get to ground. Whenever a hound

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opened in the covert throughout the winter Paddy shouted out with delight, "Dysart agin, Dysart agin."

The field was once waiting in the lane at Kilteel, when a native ran down in a state of great excitement, shouting, "I've seen the fox." "Have you?" said a prominent member of the Hunt, "what colour was he?" "Buff," was the instantaneous reply.

On another occasion of waiting at Goucher's several natives were seen running down the far side of the covert. "What's the matter, boys?" shouted the field master. One of the men shouted back, "The fox has bursted."

The late Colonel Frank Forster had a friend from England who was coming from Dublin for a day's hunting, and asked a famous horsebreaker named Cassidy to meet him at the station and show him the way. "The ditches in this country seem terribly deep and wide," said the Saxon as they rode along. "Yes, captain," replied Cassidy, "and it's my firm belief that if them gripes was cleaned out they'd find they was full of the bones of men and horses that came out hunting from Dublin and was never heard of again."

At the end of one season hounds ran into their fox and killed it on the far side of an unjumpable brook in the Rahangan country. The master was

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anxious to know if it was a dog fox or a vixen, and seeing a native on the same side as the hounds who were breaking up the fox he shouted, "Is it a vixen?" The native made no attempt to see and was obviously afraid of the hounds. The master shouted again. "Is it a vixen?" "How the h—— can I tell?" shouted back the man. "Sure, the dogs have eaten the gender out of it."

The wrecker is a peculiar product of Irish hunting districts, the loafing half tramp, half corner boy, who runs after the hounds and catches loose horses and picks riders out of ditches. Many stories are told of the impudence and address of these men, as, for instance, Dean De Burgh of Old Town would never allow a tree to be felled in his demesne. When his son, Mr De Burgh, succeeded him he very properly began to thin out the plantations. When in Naas one day he was pestered for money by an old wrecker clad in an old scarlet hunting coat, well known as old Joe. After repeated importunities all up the long street, he was at last told to go to a warm climate. "Ah!" said old Joe, "if I go there Master Tom, I'll be shure to see the ould Dane, and I'll tell him ye're cutting down all the timber."

A story of a different flavour perhaps claims a place. A very well-known and popular legal gentleman was a regular follower of the Kildare hounds.

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He one day got a very severe fall and lay stretched out as if dead. Those near quickly dismounted and tried to bring him round. Among these were two ladies, the fame of whose personal attractions extended far beyond their native country. Their efforts were at last successful, and they had the satisfaction of seeing the sufferer open his eyes. He looked for a moment into the faces of the temporary nurses, closed them again with a sigh of relief and faintly murmured, "Heaven at last!"

It is notorious that fluency of speech and the fitting of word to circumstance is not confined to the men among the country people in Ireland. A member of the Hunt at this period had occasion to call upon a lady who gave a covert to the Hunt, a lady of most charming manner, but rather plain of feature. The member was riding away after going through the covert with this lady, when he was stopped in the road by an old country woman. "You'll give me ten pounds," was her remark as he pulled up. "You're mad," replied the sportsman, "get out of the way and let me ride home." "You'll give me five pounds," replied the old woman, still holding the road. "I shall give you nothing at all," replied the sportsman, "why should I?" "You'll give me a pound," was the reply. "I will not; get out of my way." "Ye'll give me a pound," repeated the old lady, "or I'll tell the

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whole country that yo've got the ugliest swate-heart in Kildare."

It was a little girl, too, who in the story well known in Kildare gave that sporting explanation of the reason of the strewing of palms on the ground upon the entry into Jerusalem. Upon being asked the question by the school teacher she replied,

"To tache the ass to lep."

I find a letter from Lord Clonmell to the committee, which is not dated, but which I think was written at the end of his first season, worthy I think of being set out, as showing some particulars of the expenses of management at that period.

Gentlemen,

I have lately looked into the state of the finances of the Kildare Hunt with a view to making you acquainted with the expenditure necessary for the keeping up of the country.

Paying rent for coverts, earthstoppers, etc., it appears to me that at present your funds will not enable you to allow me more than £500 per annum for the establishment.

You must be aware that this sum is quite inadequate and I feel sure that if you have the power you will increase it.

I am so anxious that the country should be put in perfect order that I am willing to keep the establishment for that sum for the ensuing year.

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Lord St. Lawrence when about to take the Kilkenny Hounds got estimates of the expenses of hunting 3 days per week from Sir John Power, Lord Waterford and Mr Wason. The three estimates were within £10 of each other and amounted as nearly as possible to £950.

Of course this will entail a heavy loss on me, and I should not like to say I should or would incur it for more than one year. At the end of that period perhaps we may be able to make other arrangements.

I am Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CLONMELL.

Bishopscourt.

Near the end of the following season, viz. on February 16, 1857, a meeting of the Hunt, presided over by Mr H. Carroll, met at Naas to consider the existing state of affairs. It was then resolved to guarantee Lord Clonmell £600 a year for the establishment, and that the Hunt should assume the responsibility of all payments for coverts, rents, earthstoppers, fowls, cubs, etc., the Hunt acting through a committee consisting of Lord Naas, Sir Edward Kennedy, Mr Conolly, Mr Moore and Baron de Robeck. There was a very cordial vote of thanks to Lord Clonmell "for the very handsome manner in which the hunting establishment had

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been maintained by him." These proposals were not acceptable to Lord Clonmell and a further meeting of the Hunt at Rathcoole on March 21, 1857, marks the end of his Mastership. There were present Mr H. Carroll, in the chair, Mr John Hamilton, Mr Richard Moore, Mr Wm Calwell, Mr John Wakefield, Mr T. Conolly, Sir E. C. Kennedy, Mr Alexr Kirkpatrick, Lord St Lawrence and Lord Clonmell.

Lord Clonmell announced his wish to relinquish the hounds, and in doing so offered to the Hunt all the hounds which he had bought and which were his private property, as also the use of his kennels until the Hunt could arrange their affairs. In addition he presented boilers, etc., and other hunt requisites to the Hunt. The meeting expressed itself very sensible of Lord Clonmell's kindness and accepted his offer with many thanks, especially marking their appreciation of his generous gift of the valuable hounds added by him to the pack.

The meeting then empowered the committee to undertake any arrangements necessary to provide for the future hunting of the country and the management of the hounds, in view of Lord Clonmell's resignation. The proceedings closed with an order that the report should be sent to each member of the Hunt, and with a vote of thanks to Mr Carroll "for his dignified conduct in the chair."

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Lord Clonmell's short Mastership, though much affected by the terrible Crimean winter to which I have made reference, is still remembered in Kildare as "happy and prosperous" and marked with the greatest good feeling among all concerned in the sport. Hounds were kept at Bishopscourt at the kennels which stood on the east side of the demesne near the cottage still known as Kennel Cottage. Lord Clonmell was always careful to look after the coverts himself, and would drive about the country in his yellow wagonette, taking iron gratings to give to the farmers to stop drains where foxes went to ground. This was all the more necessary as at that time much draining was being undertaken about the country.

Lord Clonmell was a very popular personality with all classes, and especially with the tenantry. Many traits of his character are preserved, one I remember of the sort which is ever popular in Ireland. He was once driving a friend along the towing path of the Grand Canal. The friend was a little nervous and made no attempt to conceal his feelings. "What, never been in the canal?" remarked Lord Clonmell and immediately drove down the bank and turned himself, his friend and the whole machine over into the water.

It was at Oughterard Hill, on Lord Clonmell's estate at Bishopscourt, that Daniel O'Connell shot

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Mr d'Esterre, and Lord Clonmell made endless efforts to discover the exact spot of the encounter in order that he might mark it with a memorial stone. But none of the old people of the country could point it out, and it consequently remains unmarked to this day.

Lord Clonmell was very good-looking, and it was said that at Queen Victoria's Coronation he and Lady Clonmell, then newly married, were considered the handsomest couple present, and as the Irish saying goes, "it was given up to them." He died at the early age of forty-nine in 1866, and was buried at Maudlins Cemetery near Naas on Ash Wednesday of that year among signs of universal respect and sympathy. It was an impressive ceremony, the coffin being lowered into the vault by the light of torches. It was recalled at the time and is still remembered that he was a friend of the poor and a kind and considerate landlord. It was said of him when in the years of the famine the tenantry on many of the estates in Ireland were reduced to poverty and hunger Lord Clonmell said to his agent: "I am fond of hunting but I will part with hunters, hounds and servants rather than let my tenants want."



LORD NAAS, M.F.H. 1857-1862.

CHAPTER IX

LORD NAAS, 1857-1862

THE long line of Kildare men as Masters of the Kildare Hunt was continued when, at a meeting of the Club held at Naas on May 4, 1867, Lord Naas took over the hounds from Lord Clonmell, with a guarantee of £1,650 a year. At a second meeting, held ten days later, in Dublin, Baron de Robeck undertook the duties of Honorary Treasurer, and for three years Lord Naas, who was much occupied with political business, had the invaluable assistance of that gentleman as manager and as deputy in the field whenever he was called away by those public duties during the hunting season. Lord Naas had also the assistance of the most zealous and energetic of Honorary Secretaries in the person of Mr Robert Kennedy. The arrangement was that the hounds should hunt three days a week. I may here look forward for a few years to note that there was never any difficulty of finance

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during Lord Naas's Mastership. Baron de Robeck from the first was most energetic in collecting after each day's hunting, and I find sums of £4 10s. to £10 entered in his diary after every day the hounds were out, collected by him for the Hunt fund.* At a meeting held on April 16, 1860, it was stated that the Hunt was self-supporting, and that the guarantors were not called upon. The Club indeed was in the happy position of having only to pass complimentary votes of thanks to its honorary officials. The Master was asked to accept its best thanks "for the great and successful exertions he had made during the past season to promote the hunting of the country," and other resolutions point to the appreciation in which Mr R. Kennedy's services as Honorary Secretary were held. I may perhaps conclude these remarks on the business aspect of the Hunt during Lord Naas's Mastership by quoting a letter from that gentleman now before me. Mr Kennedy says, "Your father was guaranteed £1,650 a year for three days a week; we were never in debt, and at the end of his term a balance in hand of over twenty pounds was handed to the incoming Honorary Secretary, Major Mansfield."

I have spoken in the last chapter of the havoc wrought by the frost on the coverts of the Kildare country. Mr Kennedy again comes to my help with

* Cap money of 2s. 6d. a head, still collected.

his invaluable recollections. "When your father took the hounds," he writes to me, "the country was an absolute wreck. That spring, jogging home from hunting, Stephen Goodall remarked to me that there would hardly be a covert standing, and there were already not more than half a dozen."

I have set out on a former page how under the fostering care of Sir John Kennedy the hunting country of the Kildare hounds had been developed from the very modest beginnings of the first fifteen years of the century until in 1841 he left it with forty-nine well-cared-for fox coverts. I gather from slight pieces of evidence which appear at intervals during the following ten years that his wise and beneficent policy was continued by succeeding Masters, with the result that by the middle years of the century the Kildare country was eminently well provided in that all-important matter of fox coverts. The country had probably reached its best during the Mastership of Mr W. Kennedy, by which time the Hunt was enjoying the cumulative effect of half a century of careful planting, zealous overlooking and thorough preservation of foxes. But after that disastrous winter of the Crimean year the country was left practically naked, and a report of a committee appointed to make a thorough examination of the coverts, dated in the summer of 1857, amply confirms Mr Kennedy's

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recollections of the dismal state in which the frost had left the country.

It appears from this report that the forty-nine coverts of the end of Sir John Kennedy's Master-ship had been increased to eighty-eight, which strikes me as a very satisfactory increase during a period of sixteen years. Of these, fifty-three were in the home country, twenty in the Ballitore country, and fifteen in the Enfield district.

The great majority of these coverts were given rent free to the Hunt by their owners, seventy-two in fact out of the eighty-eight were thus provided. Sixteen others were rented at sums varying between £3 3s. and £15, the average being £6 18s. 6d.

Certain notes at the end of the schedule of coverts, however, gives another and gloomier view of the situation in 1857. It appears that in the preceding spring cubs had been bred in only thirty-five of the eighty-eight, though the writer adds, "there have been many other litters in earths not in coverts." But another note at the end of the report discloses the serious state of things caused by the severity of the preceding winters. "Eighty-eight coverts of which scarcely fifty are fit to draw," and from a detailed series of observations which the report makes concerning the present state of each of the coverts, it is clear that a great number of them had suffered irre-

parable disaster. Frequent entries record such remarks as " Entirely destroyed, must be resown," " Old cover destroyed, and small stick covert made this year from the subscription," or " All down." I gather, in fact, that in a good half of the coverts the frost had killed the gorse entirely, or had so thinned it that it was necessary to cut it close to save such as remained.

An interesting note appears opposite the Ballycahan covert given by Mr M. Aylmer. " A cover of 8 acres in the middle of the finest country in the world made and sown this year by Michael Aylmer, Esq." Another records that one was " Made and fenced by Mr Cullen at his own expense; two foxes turned out this year." The coverts in those times bore the names of the gentlemen who gave them to the Hunt, a custom perpetuating deeds of good sportsmanship I should like to see general in Kildare. Similar benefactions are recorded in this old list as follows: " Castlebagot: Mr Bagot gave two additional acres last year which were fenced, ploughed and sowed by Lord Cloncurry "; " Coolmine: Mr R. Kennedy has made two new earths this year." " Stonebrook: part cut this year and fenced by Mr Wm La Touche." " Saunders Grove; earths made by Mr Tynte." " Whitestown; cover fenced and earths made by Mr Tynte this year." The members of the Hunt

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indeed set to work manfully to repair the havoc of the weather. A covert at Allen was presented by Sir G. Aylmer; that at Downings by Mr D. Wright, at Oberstown by Mr J. Nolan, Sillot Hill by Lord Drogheda, Bert by Lord Downes, Sawyers Wood by the Duke of Leinster. "Your father in fact," writes Mr R. Kennedy, "infected all men in Kildare with his most wondrous enthusiasm, and all set to work with most willing hands, so that in five years when he resigned he handed over the country in the most perfect state, practically a six days a week country."

While on this subject I must describe the origin of Rathbride covert, formerly and more properly known as "Medlicott's," the gift of a living member of the Hunt, Mr Medlicott of Dunmurry, who has kindly furnished me with the details.

"During Lord Naas's Mastership we chopped a fox at Dunmurry, and the nearest covert was then at Martinstown, seven miles away. Lord Naas said, 'It takes the heart out of a winter's day to trot seven miles.' Mr Medlicott then replied 'If we could get permission from the Government to enclose a bit of ground on the Curragh, I know a great many farmers and tradesmen, all with horses, though they never see hounds, but are still good sportsmen, and I should be able to get a subscription among them to do it.' " Lord Naas

soon got the requisite permission from the Government and Mr Medlicott found no difficulty in raising the money. He was allowed to enclose eight acres altogether, a patch which included four acres of an old covert which had been made by Colonel Bruen of Old Park, Carlow, who was President of a Coursing Club on the Curragh.

Mr Medlicott had, of course, to plough the ground, and he thought he might as well raise a crop of oats the first year. The wire-worm took most of the oats, but, as he says, did not take the gorse. He got a few pounds for the crop, nevertheless, and when the whole thing was done and fenced he found that with the surplus of the subscription and the money from the oats he had a few pounds in hand. The covert was properly fenced, and at the next meet he handed Lord Naas the key with a ten-pound note representing the surplus. "Thank you," replied Lord Naas, "I am very grateful to you, and if you will make me a few more coverts in Kildare on the same terms I shall be very glad."

By such means then the gentlemen of Kildare set about to repair the damage of the Crimean winter, and it is well known that in a few seasons sport was as good in Kildare as it had even been, better, some people who remember the time say, considering the great handicap of the losses during the first few seasons. The state of things which prevailed

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at the opening of Lord Naas's Mastership is preserved in an anecdote of the late Mr T. Conolly, of Castletown. "Naas," said he to the Master, "you've drawn one turnip field and two hedges and the high road, what are you going to draw now?"

Mr Conolly I imagine was rather noted for his jocularities, and I remember another story of him which is perhaps worth recording. Railway development brought facilities for hunting men in Ireland as elsewhere, and quite early in the fifties it was customary for hunting men to hunt in Kildare from Dublin, as it is to-day. On one morning a party of Kildare fox-hunters had taken their seats in a railway carriage in Dublin for Athy. They were joined by a very pious Quaker lady, who, in order to improve the occasion, distributed some tracts she had with her among them with a few helpful words to each. After a time Mr Conolly, who had carefully read his tract and seemed much impressed said in a sad, quiet voice:

"You know poor Burton Bindon (the proprietor of the Red Bank, a well-known Dublin restaurant)* is dead. I was so glad to hear that he made a good end."

The Quaker lady leaned forward much interested.

* Still celebrated for oysters.

“ He sank quietly back on his pillow,” continued Conolly, “ and his last words were ” (shouting) “ ‘ Oysters! ’ ”

It is well known that much of Lord Naas’s time was devoted to political and parliamentary duties, and that he was in consequence often obliged to snatch a day’s hunting between others devoted to more serious affairs. Mr Medlicott calls to mind an occasion which illustrates the circumstances in which Lord Naas contrived to combine sport and politics with success. The hounds drew Rathbride and Medlicott’s covert very late, about half-past two. They found a fox at once, but could not get him to break. Lord Naas then told Mr Medlicott that Government business required his presence in London that same night, and it appeared that he had arranged for his servants to meet him at Kildare Station, where he would change, and start for the boat from Kingstown. He therefore asked Mr Medlicott to take the hounds and rode off for Kildare.

Mr Medlicott well remembers the finish of that day. They hunted about the covert but could not get the fox to break. There were some forty men standing about the little rath by the covert, and he asked them to come down and walk through the covert to help to get him out. They consented and beat the covert in very close order, but even

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this was insufficient, and the fox managed to break back and keep cover. Mr Medlicott finds a note recording the incident.

“The foxhounds hunted a fox for two hours and twenty minutes in the Curragh covert, but could not make him break and were drawn off at dusk.”

It is obvious that a Master with so many occupations could only hunt a country successfully with the co-operation of his fellow sportsmen, and with the prevalence of the best of relations between Master and Hunt. Lord Naas certainly enjoyed both in full measure. He was undoubtedly much indebted to a number of his hunting comrades for invaluable assistance, among whom it is not in the least invidious to specify Mr Wm La Touche, Mr Robert Kennedy and the late Baron de Robeck.

Mr Wm La Touche, as always, was a tower of strength to the Hunt. I remember him well myself, during my father's Mastership, in the yard at Palmerstown by the kennels on his weekly visit to inspect the hounds. The impression I have retained was that of a very pale, silent, and pensive-looking man, who seldom spoke. He lunched always with my mother on these occasions, she being one of the few ladies he ever spoke to in his later years. His care of the kennels and the breeding and training of the pack continued after my father's

time, and it is impossible to estimate the benefit the Hunt received from so long a supervision of this vital part of its organization by so great an expert and authority. The only criticism I have ever heard of Wm La Touche's management was, that as he did not ride with hounds, he gradually lost sight of the importance of their music, and that in consequence the pack became too mute in the field. How far this is a just criticism I do not know.

Mr Robert Kennedy was another indefatigable help to Lord Naas. He it was who kept a watchful eye upon the earthwarner and saw that he should never be off his horse, and riding from earth to earth and by-earth to by-earth until July was well in. As he well remarked in a letter to Lord Naas now before me, "Gentlemen will not and indeed cannot do this, but nothing pleases owners of coverts so much as the earthwarner coming down to them to be under the orders of the gentleman in charge, thus insuring his interest in the covert. My father (Sir John Kennedy) always said that every litter of cubs should be seen to by some one at least once in three weeks until the middle of July." Baron de Robeck, too, gave most valuable help in watching litters, in advising as to proper payments to be made to earthstoppers for finds, etc., and in helping to adjudicate on claims for

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poultry losses, a matter of some difficulty among an imaginative race like the Irish peasantry. One such claim is before me as I write, set forth in a big round hand with impressive flourishes of penmanship. It reads:

“ LIST OF FOWLS TAKEN BY THE FOX 12 Turkeys.”

There are many troubles and anxieties attending the successful running of a pack of hounds of which the average foxhunter little thinks. It was a rule at this period to turn down a brace of cubs in good coverts where no litters had shown themselves in the spring. The birthplace of such cubs was always a matter on which precise details must be forthcoming. Lord Shannon apparently wrote to Lord Naas in June, 1858, calling his attention to the more than doubtful origin of some cubs lately acquired for such purposes by the Kildare. “ The fact is,” he wrote, “ it is very difficult to control these foxcatchers. When they live within easy reach, as in this case, of hunting coverts, they are apt not to confine themselves to the mountains. I know that those employed by Lord Fermoy (who has no country save by usurpation) are not at all particular. I am, of course, quite satisfied that you would not knowingly allow foxes to be taken from a hunting country, and my object was merely to

draw your attention to this case, that there might, if possible, be no extension of it."

Lord Shannon was altogether mistaken as to the facts of this particular case, although the evil he complained of undoubtedly existed. "You may be sure," wrote Mr E. Kennedy to Lord Naas, "I was very particular about the foxes. The first fox I took myself, and I know where every one came from." It was a Mr Briscoe, it seems, who set Lord Shannon in motion on totally unreliable evidence, and this gentlemen requested that the foxes should be sent back. "I can't imagine," is Mr Kennedy's comment on his request, "why Briscoe should call on you to send back foxes taken out of a non-hunting part of the Co. Waterford. I do not think he has by any rules a right to ask this."

I find by a letter of request for payment that some of these cubs came from as far as Londonderry. On the other hand, great efforts were made to prevent cubs being taken out of the Kildare country. Mrs Magan of Killyon Manor, Hill of Down, who had estates in Kildare, proposed shifting litters of cubs to that county, and was implored by Mr S. A. Reynell of Archerstown to leave them for the Kildare gentlemen, and to let him send her an equal number, or indeed as many as she wanted, from the Donegal mountains, "the best foxes in Ireland." In a letter of reply the lady says:

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“ I have heard nothing whatsoever of the Kildare Hunt. I therefore consider the coverts on my estate cannot be claimed by them.” She complained that four foxes had been shot on her land, and that she had seen that the cubs left after this atrocity had been fed and kept alive, and that in the circumstances she intended to send for them when old enough to travel for her coverts in Down. “ I am altogether against their destruction,” she added, “ and have continually checked the coursing of foxes with greyhounds, a favourite amusement.”

Shifting of foxes was not unknown within the Kildare country itself. Earthstoppers were zealous to have foxes in their own coverts, and were quite capable of going to other earths to supply their own wants, especially if they had any little want of appreciation for the owners of such coverts. It is not often, however, that the practice was so unblushingly gloried in as in a famous case well remembered by Mr Robert Kennedy. He was attending the funeral of the late Mr James Whitelaw of Killeenmore at Straffan Churchyard, when at that most impressive part of the burial service “ Dust to dust,” he felt a sharp punch in the back, and heard in a loud whisper, “ I got a fine dog fox in a trap this morning.” “ Hush, hush,” said Mr Kennedy. “ He came from Sallymount,” continued the unheeding whisper, “ bad luck to them Cra-

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mers." This interesting information came from the zealous earthstopper of Moor Hill, who had followed Mr Kennedy to the funeral in order to tell him the joyful news.

Lord Naas was exceptionally fortunate in his huntsman, the admirable Stephen Goodall. I find several letters from him to my father during his temporary absences in London of which I feel tempted to set out a specimen, as showing the zeal and ability of a good Hunt servant.

" Palmerstown

" Feb. 6, 1858.

" My lord,

" I beg to enclose you an account of what we have been doing since your lordship went. We had a large field at Castletown, but a fox had left in the morning early; the hounds got on to his drag, and hunted him very slowly through the wood and away to Cullens cover, a ring, and back across the bog into Castletown, again round the cover, over the wall on the Maynooth side and away to Leixlip to ground. Bolted him, and went over the wall into Mr Aylmer's and back again into Castletown. This fox beat us over the walls. Drew Straffan blank, and Lodge Park. This was a wild stormy bad-scenting day, hunting two hours and twenty minutes altogether, just such another fox as the Castlekeely fox. I think he got to ground in Castletown again.

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“ A good day’s sport at Bray; found in Dollardstown and had a good hour’s hunting and lost him near Knockrow, owing to some dogs hunting him. Drew Welsh’s, found a mangy fox and ran very hard in cover for half an hour, went away, and ran into him about half a mile from the cover. Drew Moone blank and on to Nine Tree Hill, found again with a blazing scent, a ring round the cover away to Narraghmore Wood, through it straight for Halverstown, turned to the right across Blackrath close past Mr Bonham’s cover and ran him to ground at Hatfield; a good field out this day.

“ Saturday, Castlebagot blank and Tallaght. Found in Verschoyle’s plantations in the same bit of gorse we found in the day your lordship was out, ran down into the glen and turned to the right, close past Saggart, a ring and back into the mountains where he beat us again. I think it was the same fox that we hunted from Tallaght Hill before.

“ The puppies are doing very well that I got in lately. They ran tremendous hard for 25 minutes. We found a very mangy fox at Johnstown and killed him afterwards at Sir Edward’s. Found another fox late in the evening at Killeel, but could do no good with him having stole away from the cover unseen. This was a bitter cold day and have the honour to be your lordship’s obedient servant,

“ S. GOODALL.”

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Two years later Goodall wrote a letter which seems to point to rabies among the pack.

“ I would have written to tell you of the madness. . . . I directly applied the hot iron to each of those that were bitten: they are all apparently well up to this, and am in hopes they will continue so.

“ If there is no better account of foxes after this month (May, 1860) we shall have to hunt hares next season. Mr Robert told me last week that there was not a litter on the Enfield side nor any in Tallaght Hill, Belgard, Castlebagot, Killeel, Kilbride, Three Castles or Downshire, a serious loss in Kildare.”

I find a letter of the same date to Lord Naas from Mr Robert Kennedy on the same subject of foxes; there was obviously a bad season for foxes in 1859-60. Mr Kennedy reported cubs at Palmerstown, a strong litter at Bishops court, one at Furness, and the probability of another at the same place which had not shewn. On the other hand the vixen had been killed at Kerdiffstown and there was a strong probability of the cubs there starving. Mr Kennedy concludes with the ominous remark, “ You want twenty-five brace of cubs; it is most important.”

Many of the senior members of the Hunt still remember Stephen Goodall, and Mr Robert Kennedy, who perhaps knew him better than anyone,

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has been kind enough to tell me the following particulars of a very remarkable man.

“ Stephen Goodall was the younger brother of the celebrated Will Goodall. He was brought to Kilkenny about the year 1850 by the late Sir John Power of Kilfane as his kennel huntsman and first whip. When Sir John resigned the Mastership of the Kilkenny hounds Stephen Goodall came to Kildare as first whip and kennel huntsman to Mr Wm Kennedy, and on his retirement Goodall first became huntsman to the Kildare hounds under the Mastership of Lord Clonmell. On Lord Clonmell's resignation Goodall went to Palmerstown, under Lord Naas, with whom he remained for three or four years, when he went to the Duhallows, but again returned to the Kildares, and was huntsman during part of the time of Baron de Robeck's mastership.

“ Stephen Goodall was a very silent man, truthful and honest to a degree, and was one of nature's gentlemen, one of the truest, indeed, I have ever met with. His motto was, ‘ you cannot say too little or do too little with hounds.’ He never hit a hound, only said ‘ Shame ’ to them when riotous. His hounds were so attached to him that he dared not take notice of any one hound in particular, as, if so, the other hounds from jealousy would have killed the favourite.

“ Goodall was disliked by the hard riding men, and he was less appreciated as a huntsman than he

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ought to have been except by Lord Naas, who said, when Goodall went to England, that ‘there is not a huntsman now left in Ireland.’

“Goodall was idolized by the country people. When he returned to Kildare from the Duhallows I saw a crowd round him one cubbing morning on the Dowry Hill, Kilbride, all struggling to shake him by the hand. Goodall said not one word, but smiled down on the people. He was so loved because he was so charitable. He could never keep a sixpence in his pocket if he saw any poor person. He once told me that his sufferings were great in Kilkenny during the famine years, when he saw starving people and yet had to feed the hounds. The greatest of all runs, the Laragh run was his reward, and when he left Ireland, he had the love and respect, at all events, of those who knew him.

“In England he at once made his mark in Yorkshire with Mr Lane Fox, and in the Vale of White Horse, Cirencester, he was looked on as a wonder. When the Master there retired, Goodall was engaged by telegraph for the Heythrop by Mr Brassey. He there became famous, but his eyesight failed, and he retired.

“The late Lord Spencer when Viceroy here told me that Goodall was the very best huntsman he had ever seen, and the nicest servant.

“Goodall married secondly a Miss Wills of Johnstown Inn, a sister of Mrs Freeman, mother of the present Pytchley huntsman.

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“ He was naturally very much devoted to Mr Wm La Touche whom he in some ways resembled, and with whose methods of dealing with hounds he was in full agreement. I once saw Stephen crying bitterly over the body of a favourite hound which had been killed by accident. He said to Lord Naas, who was standing by, ‘ I will never praise a hound again, my lord, for it is sure to be killed,’ ‘ you know,’ he added, ‘ Mr La Touche never does so, he only points.’ I have tried hard to ascertain if Stephen Goodall still lives (1910), but without success, as I am much indebted to him, for I followed his good advice, ‘ never hit a hound or a child, and they will obey you by love.’ ”*

One very dramatic moment in Goodall's life at Palmerstown I myself remember. He was returning in the evening of a summer day to his house across the yard, when he saw a famous bitch hound of the pack with his own baby in its mouth. The child, which was only a few months old, had been left unguarded, and the hound had seized it and was taking it to her puppies. Goodall rescued the child, which was quite unhurt, went into his house for a gun and shot the bitch. My father, who was away at

* It was stated in the *Field* hunting supplement in the winter of 1911-12 that Stephen Goodall was then active at the age of ninety.—MAYO.



STEPHEN GOODALL, HUNTSMAN,
AND MR. WM. LA TOUCHE

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the time, on his return fully approved of what he had done.

Baron de Robeck's invaluable diary again enables me to follow in some detail the sport shown by Lord Naas, and it may at once be said that the received tradition that the sport was good throughout his Mastership is amply confirmed. The opening day of his first season was quite average. They met as usual at Johnstown Inn, on Tuesday, November 3, 1857. "A very large meet," records Baron de Robeck, "Drew Arthurstown, found, and had a good run to Swordlestown but lost. Drew Tipper, found and ran through Furness and lost; a very fair day's sport." On the 7th of the same month, with the meet at Rathcoole, and after drawing Castlebagot blank, they found at Lyons and running him through Cullens Wood, killed. Later, with a blank at Bishopscourt, Kill cover provided a fox, which gave a good run of forty-five minutes to ground on the other side of Rathmore. Here, too, is a record of an interesting day on November 14.

"Hounds met at Brittas, I joined them at Three Castles. Found, ran round the cover, and then for Downshire, lost on the high road. Dragged on the trail of a fox to a farm-house, where a fox was bagged. He was turned out and gave a good run to Arthurstown and was killed."

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On the 17th a meet at Morristown produced a fox, which gave a fast run of thirty-five minutes to ground opposite Milbank House; they then drew Castle Keely, and had a ring of forty-five minutes, ending with a kill in the open, close to Barretts Hill.

I may close the record of the first month's sport by again quoting Baron de Robeck for November 28.

“Hounds met at Punchestown racecourse. Owing to frost did not hunt till 12 o'clock. Drew Killashee, found and had a good run of two hours, killing close to Kilcullen at Melon Hill. Ran through Rathasker, skirted Herbetstown, and Castlemartin.

“Drew Newbury, found and ran to Dunstown and into Harristown after a great deal of dodging about; killed. A good day's sport.”

Sport continued interesting through December. On the 8th, for instance, “Hounds met at Saunders Grove, found a fox which went away with a few hounds through Ballyhook and was killed in the mountains. It must have been an excellent run, hounds getting away from all of us.” On the 10th there was a fast fifteen minutes from Elverstown to ground near Russborough, and then a hunting run of an hour ending at dusk close to Elverstown. Baron de Robeck was often hunting with the Carlow hounds at this period, but I find that December closed with some fair sport in Kildare.

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Thus on December 22 they met at Ballysax, found in Martinstown, and after a slow run to Castle-martin, killed in the river. They found again at Halverstown, went away fast to Hatfield, checked there for a bit, and on to Ballintagart, where they killed. On the 31st, too, there was a good run, the first part very fast, from Devies furze to Narraghmore.

The new year, 1858, opened with quite average sport throughout January. On the 14th there was a good run of one hour and ten minutes from Ards-cull covert, followed by a fast twenty minutes from Nine Tree Hill to ground near Burton Cross Roads. On February 6 "found in Halverstown and had a most splendid run of 45 minutes to Copelands, where the fox earthed, a very severe day on the horses." Then on the 11th, "Hounds met at Ballintagart; found in Sprattstown and had a fine hunting run, the latter part very fast, through Ballynure, Rathsallagh, Tynte Park, Whitestone and Ballyhook to ground about one mile beyond it; one hour and twenty-five minutes. There was a similar run on the 16th from Devies, when they killed near Dollardstown. Another of an hour from Kilcullen, on to Danestown on the 23rd.

Hunting was stopped by snow and frost for nearly a fortnight at the beginning of March, but the Baron records a good day on the 18th, when

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there was a fast run of thirty-five minutes from Killashee ending in a kill at Furness, followed by a good ring from Kilcullen. The 25th gave a good gallop from Arthurstown to Killeel. On the 27th they drew Ballintagart, found in Whitestown and had a sharp fifteen minutes to the mountains; then drew Copelands and had a fine run over Church Mountain; a good day. The Baron's last note of the season is as follows:

“ Saturday April 3rd. Hunt, 18 Milestone. Drew all blank except Eadstown; had a slow run to Downshire, lost; found in Stonebrook, but lost in the bottoms. The last day's hunting, a very good season.”

The autumn season of 1858 opened at Johnstown Inn on Tuesday, November 2, with average sport. There was a very large field as usual, and foxes provided quick short runs from Kill Hill to ground at Rathmore and from Eadstown to Punchestown. The month's hunting throughout November was quite good, though without any exceptional run. On the 6th they had a good run from Dunnestown to Batestown, then across the river at Castlemartin with a kill at Kilcullen; on the 9th from a find at Donadea there was a good thirty-five minutes to ground at Mount Armstrong; on the 11th a good hunting run from Halverstown to the Curragh,

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where they lost. On the 13th, after drawing Tallaght Hill, Verschoyle's plantation and Johnstown blank there was a good run from Kilteel to Dowdestown of forty minutes, though ending in a loss. There was a ringing run of forty minutes from Devies on the 18th; a very fair day on the 20th, with runs from Castle Keely and Longtown. Frost stopped hunting until the 25th, when there was indifferent sport from a Dunlavin meet, followed by just average days on the 27th and 30th.

It is plain from the Baron's diary that the Kildare country was feeling the full effects of the damage done to the coverts by the severity of the Crimean winter. December records show a lamentable number of blank coverts. On the 2nd Corbally, Davids-town, Ballyhook, Whitestown and Tynte Park all failed to yield foxes. The first blank day recorded in the diary for some years was the 7th, an Enfield meet; on the 30th, after a meet at Ballintagart, they drew Sprattstown, Ballycore, Ballynure, Whitestown, Copelands, and Tynte Park all blank. On the other hand, the month was not without good hunting. On the 4th a fox from the Curragh covert gave a good hunting run of two hours by Lord Drogheda's covert to Dunmurrey; on the 14th there was a good run from Halverstown, ending in a kill at Castlemartin; on the 21st the Baron writes, "drew Baltiboys, found, went away up into

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the mountains and lost, a fine run. Got a ducking trying to cross the King's River." On the 23rd, "Meet at Bray, drew Dollardstown, ran a ring for an hour and lost. Drew Devies, found, ran to Nine Tree Hill and back and killed a little the other side of Devies; a good day." Then on Christmas Eve, from a Sallins meet, they found at Kerdiffstown and had a fine fifty-one minutes to ground at Morgiana, by Kill Hill and Johnstown, and finished what the Baron describes as a grand day with a fast twenty minutes from Osbertstown to ground.

The year 1859 also opened auspiciously. After slow work at Downshire and Tipper and a find and kill in the park at Palmerstown and at Kerdiffstown, a good fox broke from Kill Hill and, heading for Kilteel, turned and ran through Arthurstown to ground in Flanagan's land, giving a grand run of forty-two minutes at a very fast pace. The scarcity of foxes, however, still continued; there is a melancholy tale of drawing Curragh, Dunmurrey, Redhills and Martinstown all blank on the 4th. On the 6th Mullacash, Killashee, Punchestown, Elverstown, Geoghanstown were all untenanted. On the 11th there was a good mountain run from Tallaght Hill to Shaun Mountain, ending in the escape of the fox in the fog, but Castlebagot, Collierstown, Johnstown and Verschoyle's plantation were all drawn blank. Later, however, on the 13th, Nine



HUNT BREAKFAST AT PALMERSTOWN 1860.



- 1 Mr. A. W. B. B. B.
- 2 Mr. West
- 3 Mr. Lambert
- 4 Mr. H. Aylmer
- 5 Mr. Hugh Bartlow
- 6 Mr. Robert Kennedy
- 7 The Hon. Denis Lawless
- 8 Mr. B. P. L. of Athy
- 9 Mr. W. S. P.
- 10 Mr. Cooke-Trench
- 11 Major of Dromeda
- 12 The Hon. Charles Doucker
- 13 Sir Edward Kennedy Bart
- 14 Mr. Thomas Connolly

K.E.Y.

- 15 Captain T. Hill
- 16 Mr. Tynte
- 17 Lord Naas
- 18 Mr. Richard Mansfield
- 19 The Hon. Alesonow Bourke
- 20 Lady Naas
- 21 Mr. R. Moore
- 22 Mr. Cole
- 23 Mr. R. Moore
- 24 Mr. Carroll
- 25 Mr. Henry Moore
- 26 Hon. Mr. Bartlow
- 27 Mr. Edmund Mansfield
- 28 Mr. Henry

- 29 Mr. Charles Marturion
- 30 Captain H. Saunders
- 31 Marchioness of Dromeda
- 32 Lord Cloncurry
- 33 Mr. James de Buren
- 34 Mr. Brumme's of Mount
- 35 Mr. Lynch
- 36 Mr. Mills of Three Castles
- 37 Mr. C. Kelly
- 38 Mrs. Robert Kennedy
- 39 Hon. Rosa Lawless
- 40 Hon. Miss Lawless
- 41 Hon. Maurice Burke
- 42 Mr. C. Kelly Junr

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Tree Hill yielded a fine run of fifty-nine minutes, ending in a kill the other side of Hatfield; on the 15th there was a brilliant run of twenty-five minutes from Palmerstown to ground at Castle-martin, followed by a find in Moore Hill and a good run to Harristown, where they unaccountably lost.

February opened with what the Baron describes as a good day, and it may be set out in his words as typical of many of the hunting days of this period.

“Feb. 3rd. Meet Athy; drew Dollardstown, found, scent not very good; ran slowly towards Knockrow by Levittstown, lost near Knockrow. Found Hollahoise, the fox was mangy, ran round the covert and killed him. Drew Moone blank. Found Nine Tree Hill and had a fine run to Hatfield, where the fox went to ground.” The tale of blank coverts continues. Thus on February 10 they drew Kill Hill, Bishopscourt, Furness, Forenaughts, West Town, Palmerstown and Kerdiffstown all without a find; on the 12th Killashee, Mullacash, Dunstown, Harristown, Elverstown were all without foxes. Barretstown, however, produced a fox which ran to the other side of Ardenode and was killed in the open. “A fine run of 45 minutes,” writes the diarist. “Few saw it, most of the field having gone home.” There is another good day’s hunting recorded of February 19.

“Meet Halverstown, found in the covert; went away in view, fox headed back to covert and

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chopped. Some hounds hunting another fox in covert went away, checked for some time, hit it off, ran close to ground near Castlemartin. Drew Martinstown, found, went away as if for Halvers-town, turned sharp to left, went away over Knock-allin Hill checked for a few minutes, went on into Castlemartin to ground; about 35 minutes. Very good. Drew Giltown blank. Drew Moore Hill, found a brace of foxes; after some time got one to go, went through Harristown and to ground in Geoghans-town. A very good day."

The early part of March was again noticeable for the number of blank coverts. Osbertstown, Castle Keely, Castlesize, Turnings, Kill Hill; Tipper, Killashee, Hortland Laurels, Laragh, all failed to yield foxes during the first fortnight. But there was a good day on March 15. They found at Cappagh and went away with only a moderate scent, but after a good hunting run they lost at Maynooth. Afterwards a fox in Turnings gave another hunting run on the slow side to Lyons, where they killed. On the 17th there was a fast twenty-two minutes from Devies to ground at Bray; on the 19th "found at Harristown, went away at once, ran by Stonebrook, Ballymore, and killed in planting the other side of Russborough. Drew Moore Hill, found, went away towards Cryhelp, turned at Honans Mill, crossed river and killed at Stonebrook. A capital day's

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sport; first run 45 minutes; second 35 minutes." The rest of the month yielded fair sport, and in view of the havoc which the frosts had wrought on the covers, it was acknowledged on all hands that the season had been a good one.

In the autumn of that year, 1859, sport continued to improve. There was a capital day on November 17, with runs from Dunstown round to Harristown and to ground near Stonebrook; and from Newberry through Danestown fast for Herbertstown, then for Greenhills, with a turn in the bottoms for Kilcullen, where the fox was killed in the covert. Baron de Robeck shall tell in his own words the day of a week later, November 24.

"Meet Saunders Grove. Found at once, went away towards Sing Hutchinson's place; fine wild mountain hunting, turned back to Saunders Grove, crossed the river to Ballyhook, dodged about there, fox much beat; found him lying down in a field, went away very fast for Whitestown and killed. As fine a hunting run as you could wish; found him at 11, killed past 2 o'clock."

On November 26 of this year, 1859, Kildare hounds had a run which is so famous that I think it worthy of a short section by itself. Kildare men claim that not only was it the best run ever known in Kildare, but the finest of any time in any country. That being so, a proposition accepted

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without any hesitation in Kildare, I think it behoves me to state at length all the information I have been able to gather about it. It may be that sportsmen in other hunting districts may have runs of their own packs on record which may lead them to challenge the supremacy claimed by Kildare. In that case the fullest particulars possible at this date are obviously desirable.

THE LARAGH RUN.

In that very interesting periodical, *Irish Sport*, for February 25, 1895, appeared a long and detailed account of this famous run. It contains some inaccuracies, which Major Mansfield, who was himself in the run, has been so kind as to correct, in his recollection of the day, which I give on a later page. But I think it worth printing for reasons given above.

On the 26th November 1859, when Lord Naas, afterwards the Earl of Mayo was master, the Kildare Hounds had a red letter day and no mistake. The meet was Maynooth and such a glorious hunting morning was it that, jogging along Stephen Goodall, the huntsman, remarked to Mr Robert Kennedy, who was then secretary to the Hunt and is still alive and well, that if only they could find a good fox a fine run was a certainty.

In those days Irish countries were not looked

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after as well nor foxes as plenty as they are now, and until Lord Naas took the mastership the Kildare Hunt was no exception. Lord Naas having hurt his back hunted that day on wheels, but passing some wild gorse which is now Laragh covert and situated about two miles from Maynooth and half a mile south of the Midland Railway he got out of his gig and drew the furze himself with a terrier. A fox went away unseen, but the hounds getting on the line away they streamed in full view of a numerous field of horsemen and without either horn or holloa. At a fine steady pace they ran by Laragh House and wheeling to the right they faced for Kilcock but crossed the railway and grand canal at Chambers Bridge which was lucky for the followers, for that watercourse is nearly fifty feet wide and ten deep. Away they went into the County Meath, not racing, but a good three-quarters pace and straight as a whip by Castle Hussey into Collestown, a covert belonging to the Meath. Here they hunted—it was the dog pack—for a quarter of an hour and without checking brought the line out at the other side, which was remarkable, for the earths were, of course, open, and the fox could have readily gone to ground if he had chosen. It was then the same story for the like distance to Culmullen, but instead of going into it the game fellow ran the boundary fence, and continued his way across that glorious country to Grange, which passing on the left, he went for Swainstown, and just before reaching its boundary fence, he was run into fair and square.

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As will be seen, this run from the turn at Laragh House, after having gone a little over a mile, was as straight to the finish as it could possibly be and was all over the Meath country. The distance hounds ran, not including the covert hunting in Collestown, was nearly eighteen miles, and the point from the furze bushes where the fox was found to where he was killed is on the map ten and a half miles, but by the land it is twelve, the extreme point being thirteen. The time was exactly five minutes under the hour and that includes the fifteen minutes in Collestown which was the only covert entered. From find to finish there was not the semblance of a check, and there were but two pauses, one on a road near Collestown and another near Grange, so of course Goodall had nothing to do except keep with his hounds, and he never touched his horn, except one little tootle as hounds raced out of Collestown, just to tell the men inside that they were again away. So savage were the hounds when the fox was killed that it was with difficulty that he could be got from them, and a lemon-coloured hound which Will Goodall of the Pytchley had sent as a present to his brother, flew at the whip to get the fox from him, and tore his coat to ribbons. And what a brave old traveller this fox was to have scorned to go to ground in any of the earths he had passed, all of which were, of course, open. A finer country to ride over is not in existence than the line chosen by that sporting fellow, every yard was grass, and fields were met with over half a mile long. No

doubt the fences were stiff, the ditches wide, and the ground in splendid order for galloping, but for which and the few minutes the horses obtained in Collestown to catch their wind, the hounds would have run away from everybody. As it was, out of some one hundred and fifty men who started, all who stayed with the hounds and were found at the finish, were the Baron de Robeck, Mr Johnny Wakefield, Mr Michael Aylmer, Mr Henry Meredith, who afterwards lived at Norelands in Kilkenny, Sir Jas. Higginson, Capt. Frank Kennedy, son of Sir John Kennedy, Bart, who was the father of the Kildare Hunt, Mr Charles Hoffman, Stephen Goodall, a couple of farmers, a groom and the whipper-in. Alas all these fine sportsmen are now dead except Mr Hoffman and the Baron de Robeck, and ever since the latter gentleman came to ride in Kildare early in the 'fifties and soon after built Gowran Grange on his own property he has been not alone one of the best of sportsmen, but one of the most useful county gentlemen in that, perhaps our premier county. He is still hale and hearty, and can ride to hounds as well as, if not better than, any other man of his age in Europe.

Turning now to Baron de Robeck's diary, I find the following.

“ Novr. 26th. Meet at Maynooth. Drew Laragh, went away fast by Laragh House to Castle Hussey, crossed railway and canal and went fast to Colles-

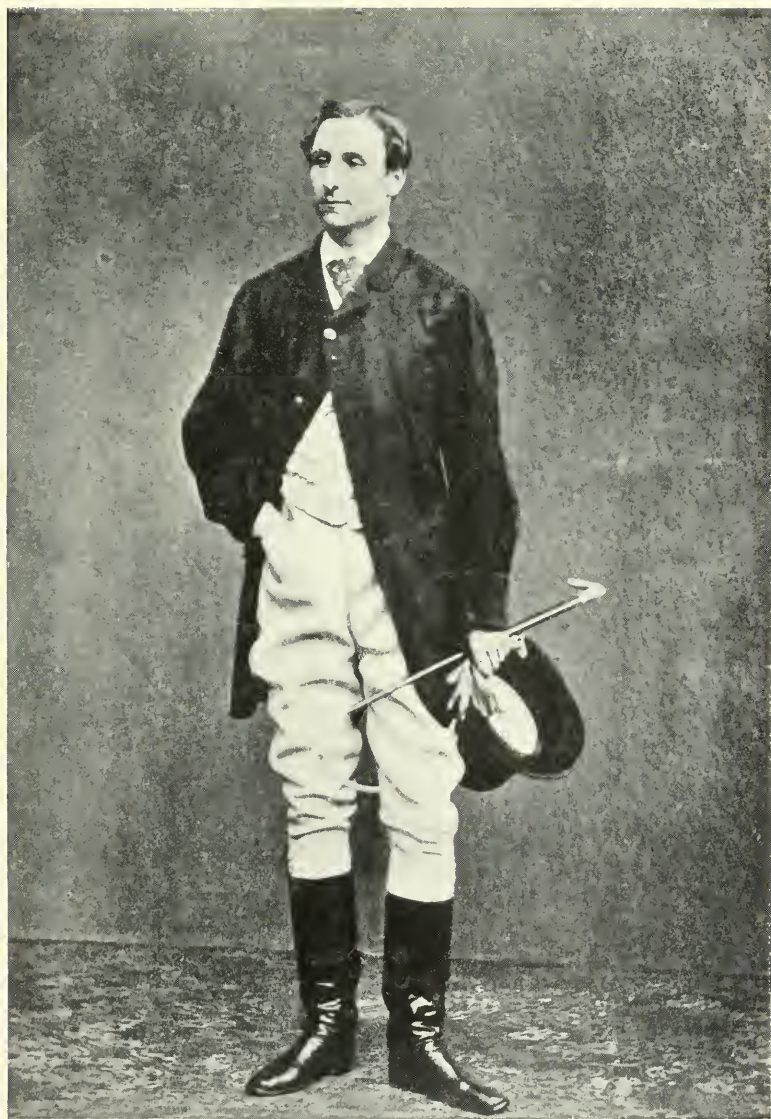
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town covert in Meath country, hunted in the covert for about fifteen minutes, then went away fast. Skirted Culmullen covert, through Grange, and killed in Swainstown wood after a run of one hour and fifty-five minutes over twenty miles of country six miles from Navan. A splendid run. Wakefield, Mick Aylmer, Mr Meredith, Sir James Higginson, F. Kennedy and a few farmers being in at the finish. Rode Cruiskeen and was well carried. Had twenty miles to ride home." Long afterwards, Mr W. B. Forbes, staying at Borris in Mr Arthur Kavanagh's time, drove Baron de Robeck to the meet at Ballydaston. Speaking of the Laragh run the Baron said, " It was the best run I ever saw, indeed, I don't see how it is possible to have had a better."

Major Mansfield's comment on the report in *Irish Sport* of which I have spoken is as follows and, as will be seen, is invaluable both for its lucidity and authority. In a letter to me, dated December, 1912, he writes:

" I make the following comments on the account of the great Laragh Run taken from *Irish Sport* which you sent me.

" My diary says, ' Having dined at the round table at Old Kildare Street Club the night before, went by Mid. Rail to meet at Maynooth. Found a Meath fox at Laragh. Ran to Collestown five miles from Collestown by Kilcarty to Murphy's of the



MAJOR EDMUND MANSFIELD
Who rode in the Laragh Run, afterwards M.F.H. Kildare.

Grange and killed at Swainstown six miles from Navan.'

"My brother Dick accompanied me. Your father drove in the old double-seated buggy and having reached the meet, not being able to ride owing to an accident and being anxious not to kill the turned down cubs in the Laragh covert without putting them on their feet, he drove on in advance with a couple of old hounds and put them in the covert. This had the effect of starting an old fox who was viewed passing Laragh House where Mr Nicholas J. Gannon lived, making for the canal and Meath country.

"Before the main pack and Goodall had reached the covert they had taken up the scent and were in hot pursuit. Many were not aware of what had occurred, and got a bad start. As to the numbers out, eighty to a hundred is quite the extreme number, including farmers and lookers-on.

"The run to Collestown was more or less a stern chase owing to the difficulty of crossing the canal. There were about twenty-five to thirty at Collestown all of whom testified to Goodall having allowed two fresh foxes to go away without attempting to hunt them. The hounds eventually forced their hunted fox out and away we went. Three men to my knowledge got as far as the Grange, but there succumbed. The field were led in two divisions, by Stephen Goodall on the left, and by Henry Meredith on the right. I was with the former, but I think the only man who knew where

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he was going was Meredith, for he had often ridden over that part of Meath.

“ There are to the best of my knowledge but two survivors of those who were present when the hounds killed their fox at Swainstown, myself and Gaffney, at that time old Jerry Aylmer’s groom at Painstown, and for the remainder of his life in the employment of the Blacker family at Castle-martin.

“ I can testify to the following names. Stephen Goodall, huntsman, Henry Meredith, Sir James Higginson, Fred Henry of Lodge Park, Michael Aylmer of Courtown, Baron de Robeck, John Wakefield, R.N., Captain Warburton, A.D.C. (no relation of the Kill family), my brother Dick, myself, and Gaffney. I never heard Hoffman’s name or Frank Kennedy’s mentioned in connection with the run.

“ Your father drove home and had to wait till past 9 p.m. before Goodall arrived at Palmerstown and handed him the brush. The scene at the forge near Swainstown was ludicrous. The smith found fifteen or sixteen people with horses nearly denuded of shoes and a long journey before them. They got away in batches of two or three, and old Jack Wakefield rode his gallant grey mare the whole way home to Carnalway, a distance of nearly thirty statute miles. Michael Aylmer, Courtown, put up our horses for us, and I returned with my brother by the late afternoon train from Kilcock. I brought the first news of the run to Kildare Street Club,

where it was not too well received by the Meath hunting men, who rather looked upon us as trespassers in their country, but when the real facts became known the feeling soon died out.

“Collestown had formerly belonged to the Kildare country but was handed over to the Meath some years before.

“When the fox was broken up Gaffney begged Goodall to give him a piece of the fur to take home to his master, old Jerry Aylmer at Painstown, as he said he would not believe he was at the end of the run if he had not something to show.

“I sold Yellow Jack the horse I rode that day to your uncle by marriage, William Moore, for £200 the following season. The grey that Gaffney rode was sold to Sir James Higginson, and Lord St. Lawrence on my advice bought Capt. Warburton’s horse at the close of the season.

“Fred Henry got one of the pads and had a paper cutting added to it. I saw it often at Lodge Park.”

I shall now give Mr Robert Kennedy’s remarks upon the run.

“The account from *Irish Sport* is a fairly true account, but the run took place from Laragh covert, then, like most other coverts, a perfect wreck, only a few furze bushes here and there. Hanway’s father was then earthstopper, a very worthy decent man. Your father got out of his dogcart, and walked from end to end of the covert

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with a terrier, and when hounds were put in, they at once streamed off on that wondrous fox—a Meath one. The point was fully sixteen, some say eighteen miles. I heard Meath men disputing the distance after the run. It was over the cream of Kildare and Meath, only one covert touched, the hounds never once moved, and the horn only sounded once when in Collestown covert, and the fox killed in the open. The hounds were in that condition that one, ‘Statesman,’ a liver-and-white coloured hound that the famous Will Goodall sent as a present to his brother Stephen, flew at the whipper in and tore his coat when he took the fox from the hounds. Goodall never reached Palmerstown that night until ten o’clock; he always walked the hounds home after a long run. Your father was unable to drive on, but your uncle, ‘Johnny’ Bourke called on his way back to Palmerstown to tell me of the run.

“There is no doubt that the Laragh run is the best of all time, the distance, the country, the sound pace, hounds never once touched and the fox killed made it a run of itself. Goodall alone jumped the last fence, riding a famous black horse called the ‘Nigger.’ He told me he thought he galloped over one field three quarters of a mile in length.”

There is one little pleasantry connected with the Laragh run which may be worth recording, as it preserves also the spirit of healthy rivalry which

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very properly pervades the Meath and the Kildare Hunts. A number of graziers from both countries were talking over the great run at market when some one expressed wonder that the fox had not got to ground during an eighteen mile point. Mr Michael Cullen who overheard the conversation remarked that he admitted that it was a Meath fox that had given such fine sport, and that was why he did not go to ground. "He thought it was the Meath Hounds that were hunting him," he added, "and knew, therefore, that his life was safe and that there was no need to get to ground. But he made a bad mistake, and paid the penalty."

Such, then, is the story of the Laragh run of November, 1859, and I expect that few will be found to disagree with Mr Kennedy when he claims for it that it was the finest run on record in any country. But as I have included some miscellaneous remarks on Irish sport generally, which, though not strictly relevant to the history of the Kildare Hounds, seem to be of present interest, I shall make no apology in setting out a very extraordinary account of an Irish fox which I found in the pages of the old *Sporting Magazine*, a fox which apparently gave runs which may compare with that of Laragh. It was written by Sir Philip Hoare, from whose *Recollections of My Sporting Life* I have already quoted at length in a former chapter.

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“ It was on the 15th November 1810,” writes this gentleman, “ that we first found that so celebrated Longueville Fox called by Captain Porter, an ardent and regular English sportsman, ‘ Spanking Jack,’ the day we ran him to Laurentium, the seat of Arthur Gethin Creagh, Esqr., beyond Doneraile about thirteen English miles without the slightest check, and a slapping pace all the while. He then doubled back and got into the park at Doneraile, and owing to the vice of some young hounds, we were obliged to draw off the pack and lost him on this day.

“ In about a fortnight after, we found him about the same spot in the demesne of Longueville, viz. in a large turnip field. He took on this occasion a different country altogether, and having run through some seven parishes right on end, and after as severe a chase as ever I remember, of thirty English miles at least, we saved him alive in the presence of every member of the Hunt, all being well up, hounds, horses and riders moving in a steady, compact body through the entire work, which I can safely impart to you was one of the prettiest things it has been my good fortune to witness. The seven parishes were Ballyclough, Kilshanick, Mallow, Monvally, Raheen, Glenville, and Monemeny. He was saved in the middle of a wild heath. On this day Mr Beechey was in the county Kilkenny hunting, as I heard, with the Kilfane hounds, and his brother was the manager. When old Colonel Wrixon rode up, the manager

said it would be injurious after such a run to the hounds not to give them blood. To which the old colonel in his dry way replied, ' If you kill that fox I'll never hunt again.' The rejoinder was, ' That is quite enough, Sir, you have saved his life.'

" During that season every time we drew Longueville we were sure to find ' Spanking Jack ' waiting to give us a day's sport. He was lost twice after, and saved three times. The third time he waited like a dog to be picked up. ' You see my lads,' said the colonel, ' what it is to take an old fellow's advice; you have all the run clear of the cloth.' But as everything must have an end, in the spring of 1812, poor Jack, having no one to intercede for him, was accidentally killed by a pack of harriers. He was known by the marks on his ears, they having been slit each time he was saved. We never had less than twenty-five English miles at him. He often seemed not to know where he was running to. I well recollect his changing his ground from Longueville (as we supposed from being so often disturbed there) to Ballyclough Park, about two miles distant, whence we had but one remarkable run, and when drawing again, we heard of the accident that befell poor Jack."

To conclude our glance at the records of long runs, there is an account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of an extraordinary instance of the endurance of foxes and hounds which was illustrated by the

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performance of two or three of the pack with which Lord Castlehaven used to hunt the Wilts country early in the nineteenth century. They found near Salisbury, and soon lost. Next morning, however, the fox and one hound were found lying dead from exhaustion side by side in a field near Burwash, between Tunbridge Wells and Hastings, with another hound nearly dead in an adjoining field. The spot where the fox and hound lay was a good hundred miles away from the find.

Returning to our subject, there was another great run at a later date in Lord Naas's Mastership which deserves particular mention, a run indeed which would have made his term memorable apart from the great run from Laragh. I find the following entry in Baron de Robeck's diary under date January 26, 1861.

“Hounds met at Ballymore. Drew Bishopsland, found at the waterfall Poul-a-Phouca, ran a ring to ground close to the river near Russborough. Drew Hollywood, found no end of foxes, chopped a couple, got no run from it. Found at Baltiboy's, broke across the river, went away to Russborough, turned at Barretstown Hill and straight into Downshire where we had a longish check, after which he broke again and took us over a fine line of country by Slievethoul, Collierstown, and into the village of Rathcoole and, getting quite dark, I do not know

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what became of the fox. It was a very fine run, must have been upwards of twelve miles."

This is a short description of the famous run from Baltiboy's, and I am fortunate in getting a more detailed account of it from Mr Robert Kennedy.

"It was good," he writes, "to see Bryan Flanagan, the oldest and best of earthstoppers, waving his hat and cheering as the hounds streamed out, not moved out, on their fox over the Caureen Hill; the Baron on his famous grey horse close by, and gallant Johnny Conolly well on the right and going straight as an arrow down close to Punchbowl old covert, no Tinode in those days, and straight way towards Slievethoul Hill. Will anyone who saw it ever forget, when there was a moment's pause on the road just before the hill was reached, seeing the great hound 'Stormer' jump the wall of the road without touching it, going across the field, jump the furze on the fence into the plantations, and as he landed, showing us all that he had the line. That line left Johnstown half a mile on the left and over a fine country, close to Saggart village, and here 'the foremost horseman rode alone' great Stephen Goodall, and he nearly got to Rathfarnham before he found the hounds. He always told me that he believed the fox escaped, 'and might have got to Grafton Street in Dublin.'

"The Baltiboy's run had that one flaw, the fox

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was not killed, but the hounds were not touched, and only one covert, the Downshire, entered. When the fine fox left that covert close to where the field stood, Roddy Miley on 'The Protestant Church' his famous horse, made a dart after him. Goodall, the only time I ever heard him speak to a member of the field, quietly asked Roddy if he was mad; the reply was that he had lunched.

"The Laragh run no doubt was the best run on record, and three such runs as that, the one from Baltiboy's, and another, which as Stephen Goodall once told me was the greatest of all, were never known before during one Mastership lasting only five years. That third run was after a fox that crossed within a few yards of the hounds as they stood at Tuck Mill near Baltinglass."

I have unfortunately been unable to gather any particulars of this run from Tuck Mill, except that the hounds hunted him for hours and lost him in the end.

The story of such runs as these makes the records of other sport commonplace, but the hunting in Kildare during Lord Naas's term was quite good. On December 1, 1859, a fox at Ardsclull went away fast as if for Dollardstown, turned and crossed the Athy road at Bray, and ran to ground close to Athy after a capital run of twenty-five minutes. A week later, December 8, after drawing Rathangan blank, they found in Dunmurry cover, and

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had a very fast fifteen minutes over a capital country to Neale's Farm, where he got to ground. At the Hill of Allen they found a fox, which gave another capital twenty minutes, and was run down and killed in the open. On the 10th, drawing Barretstown, they found and ran very fast to Floods Mill, then on for Naas, turned to right at canal and ran straight across the bottoms and over Greenhills, through Bateman's place to ground at the rocks over Castlemartin. "A fine run of 55 minutes," writes Baron de Robeck. The year, however, ended indifferently. There was hard frost on the 15th, which continued till the 23rd, followed by heavy rain, and there was little to record except slow, short ringing runs, and chopped foxes.

January, 1860, was remarkable for a good run from Loghatrina fast by Cannycourt, Moore Hill and Geoghanstown through Stonebrook to ground in the banks of the river, a very good fifty minutes. Also for a fine hunting run on the 31st from Stonebrook, through Russborough to Russells-town Road, by the river to Barretstown Hill, where he was lost in the dark. The best day of a very good month's sport in February was the 18th, with the meet at Ballymore Eustace. "Drew Moore Hill, found, went away very fast by Cannycourt and Grange Bog towards Giltown, through Moore

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Hill, Geoghanstown, crossed the river, and recrossed it through Homans and Whiteleas, on for Hollywood, where we killed in the open. A fine run of one hour and a quarter."

March continued the story of excellent sport. There was a capital day from a Sallins meet on the 1st, with a find at Kerdiffstown, away in view through Palmerstown and on to Kill Hill, then a turn back over exactly the same country with a kill in Kerdiffstown close to where he was found. A fast and capital run. They went on to Eadstown, found, went away through Craddockstown, Killashee, Mullacash, Danestown, Newberry, finishing an excellent day's sport with a kill at Harristown Bridge. Thursday, the 8th, after yielding a fast fifteen minutes from Corbally round the hill and across towards Davidstown to a kill in the open, provided also one of the best hunting runs of the year. They found at Moone, went away well to Davidstown, on to Heustown, then through Strandford Lodge to the Slaney, crossed and back to Henstown and Corbally and into Saunders Grove, to ground after two hours and a half of good hunting.

On the 15th there was a fine run of forty minutes from Cryhelp to ground beyond Jackdaw Glen; on the 17th another of one hour from Turnings to ground near Straffan. Here, too, is a record of an interesting day on the 24th.

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“ Found Three Castles, went away well along the hills, crossed high road at Coogans and on towards Punchbowl to ground near large fence. Dug him out while we drew Downshire blank; came back, bolted him and ran to Kilbride through it to Three Castles, where we lost. A long day.”

The season of 1860 opened with a large gathering at Johnstown Inn on November 6, and what the Baron describes as “ a famous day for the ladies,” with short runs about Kerdiffstown, Palmerstown, Bishops court and Forenaughts; but the hunting throughout the month was indifferent. There was a fortnight of extremely bad scenting weather followed by thick fog, frost and heavy rain at every appointment, one or the other spoiling such sport as a find promised. December opened better, though it was a pouring day on the 1st with the meet at Rathcoole. A find at Tallaght Hill, however, provided a long hunting run over the mountains for two hours and a half, ending in a loss by reason of the excessive wet. Verschoyle’s plantation then yielded a fox, which broke away in beautiful style with the hounds and gave a sharp thirty minutes till the dusk, when hounds were called off. On December 8 they found in Newberry, ran through Harristown, turned far end of Newberry, headed as if for Greenhills, turned back into Newberry, and through Harristown by Stonebrook

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Lodge along the banks of the river, crossed the road as if for Stonebrook, but turned and crossed the Ballymore Road at Wellfield and on then by Barretstown and killed outside Russborough wall, a fine hunting run of one hour and thirty minutes.

Then on the 11th, "Drew Kilteel, found and went away fast. Crossed the road near Morgianina; fog came on so thick, hard to make out where we were going, came to a check but hit it off again over the hills by Gouchers, on by Mr Cogan's house, kept along the hill-side, crossed near Punchbowl and on for Downshire, at the time running hard when unfortunately ran to ground close to Mr M. Danes of Punchestown. A fine run of 50 minutes. Only five up at the finish, Goodall, Cole, Lane, Capn. Price and self and a lad mounted on a capital mare."

As the season went on and ran into the new year of 1861 sport continued so good that I must only quote a run from each month from the Baron's diary.

The best day in January was the 26th, that from Baltiboys which I have already set out. From February's record I select the following:

"Saturday, Feb 23rd. Hounds met at Eadstown, drew Elverstown, found, went away, lost in the direction of Downshire, turned back for Elverstown, where hung for a few minutes, when

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away again straight for Punchestown by Dowderstown, on again over Punchestown course back to Elverstown and on towards Downshire and killed in a small planting, a capital run of one hour and ten minutes. Drew Millicent, went away fast across Kearney's farm and across Swordlestown to Punchestown and on to within a field of Elverstown, turned and went straight to Ballymore Eustace, where he got to ground after a fine run of one hour and ten minutes. A capital day's sport."

Heavy storms of snow and rain interfered much with the sport in the first weeks of March, but from the story of a more than average month I select the following:

" March 26th. Hounds met at Donadea, found, and went away fast for 20 minutes, ran into him and killed near Hortland covert. Drew Laragh and had a fine run of 55 minutes, a ring partly, and killed a little beyond Laragh. A very good day's sport."

The hunting continued until the middle of April, and was quite good to the end, and the season 1860-1 was memorable for the consistently good sport shown.

The autumn of 1861 again provides a record of increasingly good sport which is embarrassing in its fullness. Here again quotation must be confined to a single run in each month, but generally of this, the last season of Lord Naas's Mastership, it may

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be said that there was scarcely a bad day except during one or two short periods of east wind and bad scent, and that if without such sensational runs as that of Laragh, or that from Baltiboys, the hunting of 1861-2 was probably more consistently good than any season of which there was record.

From November records I select this as typical of the month's sport.

“ Novr. 7th. Hounds met at Gormanstown, drew Loghatrina blank, drew a small bit of gorse at back of it and had a pretty run by Hatfield to ground at Balintagart. Drew Moore Hill and had a nice run heading for Cryhelp, turned into Grange Bog then on to Giltown by Gormanstown.” A day or two later, with the meet at Birt, the Baron and Mr J. Hamilton were at Moat of Ardsclull “ where, while we were waiting for the hounds to come up at a farm-house, all of a sudden we heard them in full cry, they had found in Birt and run through Sawyers Wood. We joined them and had a fine run of 35 minutes to ground close by the town of Athy, having run by the ruins of Bray and Kilmoroney Farm.”

From December I take the following:

“ Hounds met at Eadstown, drew it, found and went away well as if for Arthurstown, but came to a check; on to Tipper and through it for a few fields and lost. Drew Elverstown and went away well for Dowdonstone straight into Russborough



MEMBERS OF THE KILDARE HUNT (about 1860).

(Reading from left to right.) Sir E. Kennedy, Mr La Touche, Lord Clonmell, Baron de Robeck, Mr Tynk, Major Burroughs, Lord Drogheda, Mr Carroll, Mr Conolly, Mr and Mrs W. Roberts, Mr W. Kennedy, Mrs Tynk, Lord Mayo, Mrs W. Kennedy.

crossed the Liffey and went to ground close to the waterfall, a very fine run and very fast."

For January, 1862, the following, though shortly put down, is quite typical of a month full of good hunting.

" Jan. 4th. Hounds met at Rathcoffey, drew it blank; drew Laragh, found, and had a good run of one hour and twenty minutes and killed over a fine country." Again on the 14th, " Found at Curragh covert, fox broke well across the railroad and towards the camp, turned to the left and straight across the Liffey and through Bateman's place and got to ground in the rocks near Castlemartin. A capital run and a fine sight across the Curragh."

I quote the following mention of a place in the hill country, which has had sinister recollections for many generations of Kildare sportsmen:

" Feb. 11th. Hounds met at Ballymore, frost so hard could not attempt to hunt till 12 o'clock, even then very bad, and slipping all day. Drew Elvers-town, found, and ran fast to Russborough, through it and on to the Poul-a-Phouca waterfall where several of the hounds were washed down the falls, fortunately none were lost. In the meantime we lost our fox. Drew Downshire, and had a good hunting run heading first for Russborough, then turned and went over Athgarett and got to ground at Rathmore, one hour and ten minutes."

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Foxes were much more numerous at the end than at the beginning of Lord Naas's Mastership, and the following is quite exceptional reading after 1859. The Baron, however, perhaps gives the true explanation:

" Feb. 22nd. Meet at Kilcock. Drew Courtown, Ballycahan, Grange, Hortland, Donadea, Mount Armstrong, Straffan, Lodge Park and Turnings, all blank. Very bad. Think there must have been neglect in the earthstopping."

March may be represented by the following:

" March 1st. Hounds met at Blackchurch; drew Johnstown, found, had a ring when away sharp to Kilteel, then after a check in the covert he broke as if for Johnstown, scent being very bad, cold east wind, we dragged on slowly into Johnstown and gave him up." Later I read: Found Saunders Grove, went away slowly, but the scent improved and we were going on good terms when he got to ground in a shaw above old Punchbowl; he did not stay long in it, but bolted and went away very fast to Kilteel, then on to Johnstown, through it and away over Newtown and got to ground in Collierstown; a good run of one hour and fifty-five minutes."

I could go on page after page with accounts of similar runs during this wonderful season of 1862. Space, however, bids me put down the details of the last day of Lord Naas's Mastership.

April 5. Hounds meet at Blessington; drew Baltiboy, found, and had a fine run of thirty-five minutes through Russellstown and into Downshire where the hounds hunted for some time a fresh fox; he broke at last but got away sometime before the hounds and we had a good hunting run to Walpestown. Drew Gouchers blank, found Johnstown, and had a good run by Athgoe to close to the wall of Lyons, then turned and came back to Castlewarden Hill into Johnstown, and lost. "A capital day's sport, and a good finish for the season," is the Baron's comment.

I shall allow a story which comes naturally into this chapter to appear in the words of Mr M. W. Dunne, who has most kindly sent it to me.

"My father, who held the late Lord Mayo in great esteem, used to tell the following with great gusto.

"During Lord Mayo's (then Lord Naas's) Mastership, hounds one day had a long delay in Downshire covert trying to get a lurking fox to break. When he did go he took the low country, a grand but stiff line, and hounds had traversed but a few fields when they were at a loss. The huntsman Goodall cast about a bit when hounds suddenly shot over a high stile, and off like a rocket, keeping a well-marked pathway leading over a succession of stiles to Rathmore Village.

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“My father on Boundaway, who was 3rd in Liverpool Grand National, got over safe and so did his lordship; but Goodall came to grief, and the whole field were pounded. The two named had it all to themselves. After crossing stile after stile Lord Naas said. ‘Dunne, is it not queer how he sticks to the path.’ Dunne replied “I think it must be a dog.” His lordship said ‘Dog or devil, while hounds go like this, we will never seek a better quarry.’

“And sure enough it was a big red Irish terrier which they ran to ground in his owner’s house in Rathmore to the consternation of the man who appealed in frantic tones ‘Not to let the dogs kill Barney.’ A crown piece from his lordship and assurance of Barney’s safety made his master happy.

“My father always wound up by saying that this was the best ten minutes he ever had in his life, and that Lord Naas was the best man for a big weight he ever knew.”

Mr Medlicott of Dunmurrey, too, has very kindly given me a few recollections of some of the incidents of this period. He himself had always a great liking for the Athy country, he never missed a meet there; as he says, there was no wire then. He remembers particularly a very fast run right into the town where they killed their fox under the old gaol. On another occasion they ran a fox into the

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ruins of the old church at Bert, where he jumped up on the roof of a cowshed and climbed up the ivy high on to the gable of the ruins. Mr Medicott climbed up as far as he could after him and tried to get him to jump down by cracking his whip. There was a great assembly of country people watching the fun, jeering, and crying "Ah, he'll bate ye yet." At last Mr Medicott got near enough to scare him, and he took a leap right into the middle of the pack, who were huddled up so close watching him that they had no room to lay hold of him. He got clean away, and gave a fine eight-mile run towards Bolton Hill, and escaped. "Such a fox," says Mr Medicott, "was bound to live."

Perhaps one or two personal stories of Lord Naas may be allowed before bringing this chapter to a close. He used to read the following letter he received from a bailiff during his absence in London with great relish:

Me Lord,

The fox killed one of thim signets on the lake. I found the biggest goose I could in your lordship's absence and put him on the nist.

Yours obedient,

T. K.

As is well known to Kildare people, there are two towns of Bray in the eastern part of the island,

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one the well-known watering place in Co. Wicklow, the other near Athy. This last was often a meet for the hounds, but a new proprietor of a hotel at the watering place had not heard of the Bray near Athy, and when he saw the advertised meet thought the hounds were coming to his own town on the coast. He therefore wrote to the Master and offered the Hunt a breakfast at his hotel. The Master replied:

Dear Proprietor of the Grand Hotel, Bray.

Your Bray is not our Bray, neither is our Bray your Bray.

Yours truly,

NA. ASS.

Lord Naas's Mastership came to an end by his resignation at the end of the spring season of 1862 after a term of just five years. It will be understood that I have relied absolutely upon the testimony of others for the details of the period during which he had the hounds, and that if these details are fuller than in some preceding chapters, it is because the period is nearer our own times and within the memory of some of the older members of the Hunt. I will conclude with Mr Robert Kennedy's final recollections of Lord Naas's Mastership, only asking my readers to excuse any signs of partiality which they may discover in the remarks of a gentle-



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man who has always been a professed admirer of my father.

“ There was no country committee, the man at the helm, your father, was in sole command and did it all. The Kildare side had been practically given up, Dunmurrey had not been visited by hounds for years; Allen was first drawn in your father's time; the Curragh covert made by my father was remade by Mr Medlicott; Lord Valentia then made Boston; Lord Drogheda Sillot Hill; your father made Eagle Hill or took it up; also Barn Hill, since given up; in fact the present Monday country might be called the ‘ Mayo Country ’; but so might all Kildare. For your father had made quite as many as fifteen, or perhaps twenty, new coverts, from Mount of Ardsclull, Athy, to Belgard five miles from Dublin, both new coverts. I once expostulated with him that he was making too many coverts. His reply was, ‘ I would make every furze patch in the country a fox covert if I could.’ A ‘ Parliament man ’ as the country folks call a member, he visited every covert during the summer months, and many twice. Goodall, who was Colonel Anstruther Thomson's first whip, once told me that of the two, your father knew more about hounds and hunting than the great Master.

“ I have hunted with all the Masters since my father made Kildare and Lord Naas remade it; Sir John Kennedy, Mr John La Touche, Mr O'Connor Henchy, Mr Wm. Kennedy, Lord

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Clonmell, Lord Naas, Baron de Robeck, Sir Edward Kennedy, Mr Forbes, Major Mansfield, Colonel Moore, and H. de Robeck, seventy five years, and during all that time with my heart in fox-hunting, I kept my eyes open and my hearing was good, and from what I saw and from what I heard, I can safely say that, taking the state of the coverts into consideration, by far the best sport ever known in Kildare was during Lord Naas's Mastership."

HUNTING IN KILDARE

Air, " Old Farmer Giles."

Come join with me in sportive glee
Diana's daughters fair
And Nimrod's sons, ye mighty guns,
Your tuneful notes prepare.
Assist me all who love to call
On Reynard in his lair
And with your lave I'll sing a stave
On hunting in Kildare.

At Johnstown Inn our joys begin
Upon our opening day,
If you're not there your friends will swear
You're dead or gone away.
'Tis there we chaff and joke and laugh
There's many a greeting there
'Mongst those who've hied from far and wide
For hunting in Kildare.

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To Kerdiffstown as we jog down
Each nymph and gallant swain
Resolves to go through weal or woe
O'er rasper, wall, or drain.
Hark, tally ho, away they go
Now for the run prepare.
Lose not a minute or you're not in it
When hunting in Kildare.

Keep up your head, keep down your hand,
Sit steady, straight and tight,
Don't make a burst or go at first
While yet your game's in sight;
Your thoughts combine to mark your line,
Of rushing fools beware
And put on pace at proper place
When hunting in Kildare.

What music sweet, what hounds so fleet,
O, rapture, O, what bliss!
All earthly joys are childish toys
Compared with sport like this.
The rattling fun of Reynard's run
Dispels all earthly care
And cures more ills than Cockle's pills
When hunting in Kildare.

Now here's a toast my jovial host
May hunting flourish long,
May all support that noble sport
And to its meeting throng;

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May all unite in fond delight

Its kingly joys to share.

Come, come, fill up and drain a cup

To hunting in Kildare.

“ Grey Cob.” Mr T. Kenny.



BARON DE ROBECK, M.F.H. 1862-1868.

CHAPTER X

BARON DE ROBECK, 1862-1868

BARON DE ROBECK, of Gowran Grange, Co. Kildare, by his acceptance of the invitation of the Hunt Club to take the hounds, filled the vacancy caused by the resignation of the Mastership by Lord Naas in the spring of 1862. Baron de Robeck's family had been long and honourably known in Kildare. I have already quoted some short extracts from a diary kept by his father, relating to a very early period of the Hunt. Baron de Robeck himself, as appears from other notes from his own diary, had hunted regularly with the Kildares since the year 1853. It was felt in the county that no better sportsman could have been found to succeed Lord Naas, and that a continuance of the good sport and general prosperity which had attended the late Mastership was likely to be maintained under his auspices. I may say at once that those anticipations were abundantly realized during the six seasons which followed.

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Baron de Robeck's acceptance of the Mastership is thus noted in his diary under date of March 12, 1862:

“ Hunt meeting at Naas. Lord Naas resigns mastership of the hounds and I am given it with a guarantee of 1,650 a year.”

This, it will be remembered, was the figure at which Lord Naas had hunted the country during his term, and considering the nature and extent of that country it was not an extravagant subscription upon which to show sport for three days a week. As a fact it was found inadequate. Among Baron de Robeck's papers there is the report of a general meeting of the Hunt which was held at McEvoy's Hotel, Naas, on November 18, 1863, to consider the question. Lord Drogheda was in the chair, and there were present Baron de Robeck, Lord Naas, Lord Clonmell, Capt. Tuthill, Capt. Roberts, Mr C. C. Vesey, Capt. Rainsford, Mr D. Mahony, Mr Jas Lynch, Mr W. F. Cogan, M.P., Lord Earlsfort, Mr Rd Moore, Mr R. Kennedy, Mr E. Cole and Mr E. A. Mansfield, the Hon. Secretary.

It was proposed by Lord Naas, seconded by Mr C. C. Roberts, and adopted unanimously—

“ That Baron de Robeck having shown that the present subscription of £1,650 is quite inade-

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quate to defray the necessary expenses of hunting the Kildare country, and having stated that he is willing to hunt the country four days a week during the present and coming season provided the sum of £2,000 is guaranteed to him for each of the said years, this meeting pledges itself to make every exertion to raise the necessary funds and appoint a committee for that purpose to consist of the following members:

“J.P. Tynte, Esqr., Lord Naas, R. Kennedy, Esqr., and E. Cole, Esqr.”

Members in the room made a very public-spirited effort to carry out this resolution before parting, and those who promised sums ranging from £75 a year to £5 beyond their normal subscriptions were Lord Drogheda, Lord Naas, Capt. Tuthill, Mr C. C. Roberts, Mr J. Lynch, Mr C. Hoffman, Mr Cogan, Mr Tynte, Mr E. Fitzgerald, Mr Royse, Mr G. Wise, Mr D. Mahony, Mr R. Moore, Col. O. Hanlon, Mr W. Robertson, Mr Walsh, Mr R. Kennedy, Sir J. Power, Mr W. Kennedy, Mr Vesey and Mr E. A. Mansfield. It is quite clear that all financial difficulties were thus overcome, in fact I find an entry in the Baron's diary nearly two years later, viz., February 14, 1865, in which he notes that he undertakes the hounds for another season for a guarantee of £1,850.

The boundaries of the Kildare country which the

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Baron took over were, of course, unaltered, and there is ample evidence that the ardent spirit which had animated the Hunt to repair the damages to the coverts which had been wrought by the disastrous Crimean winter had been eminently successful. I have recorded on a former page how members, each in his own district, had combined by planting or fencing to make good the devastation which had left the Hunt with a bare fifty coverts fit to draw. The result of this co-operation, though gradually displaying itself throughout his Mastership, was perhaps only fully visible at the time that Lord Naas gave up the hounds. At any rate, a list published during a middle year of Baron de Ro-beck's term discloses the fact that in the year 1865 the Hunt possessed 116 coverts, all apparently in reasonable condition. Many of these, of course, were demesnes, as to-day, others were given by landowners, both by hunting men and by sportsmen who did not themselves follow hounds but still wished the Hunt well; some again by ladies. Many, of course, were rented. The highest rent paid in that year was, I find, for Eadstown, which cost £15. The majority were at a lower figure, with an average perhaps of £5. Later in the Baron's Mastership a luxury was indulged in in the taking of Elverstown; £2 an acre was paid for that famous cover, and as it measured eleven acres and a

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quarter the rent came to nearly £23 a year. The owner was Mr J. J. Hornidge, of Russelstown Blessington, but his tenant, a Mrs Smith, of course, received the rent. In the same year, 1867, the Duke of Leinster let Ardsclull covert to the Hunt at the nominal rent of one shilling.

It may be of interest to quote an outside opinion of the Kildare country and its management at this period. I find the following in an undated newspaper cutting among the Baron's papers, which I judge, from its appearance, to be by the sporting correspondent of the *Irish Times*:

“ The Kildare country is one of the best in Ireland, the eastern and northern districts being the cream, a large portion of which is not surpassed by any country in the United Kingdom, as regards scent and good going at all seasons. The style of hunter best suited is a flippant jumper with good pace, high breeding being indispensable, for I believe hounds can go faster, and as to beauty of symmetry, fashionable blood and hunting qualities they have few equals, and if a fault exists, it is their want of sufficient voice, which is being corrected in the young entry.

“ The kindest feelings exist toward the Hunt, and the farmers are the best preservers of foxes. If their adjoining covert happens to be drawn blank, they feel the disappointment more acutely than any person else. The average of the field is about

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one hundred and fifty, varying as it does between one and three hundred."

The pack at this period must be regarded as the creation of Mr Wm La Touche, who, as I have said, throughout Lord Naas's mastership continued his beneficent supervision of the kennels, and never once missed spending one day a week at Palmers-town for that purpose. The remarks of the writer I have quoted as to the lack of voice in the pack, which I have heard elsewhere, is the only criticism ever put forward of the results achieved by that incomparable judge and breeder of hounds. If justified, it was probably a consequence of Mr La Touche's absence from the field and lack of opportunity of seeing the hounds at work.

The pack when Baron de Robeck took it over consisted of fifty and a half couple of hounds. A contemporary list gives a very clear indication of the blood Mr La Touche relied upon. This was chiefly from the famous Belvoir pack of the Duke of Rutland, that of Mr Foljambe's, of Lord Yarborough's and Lord Henry Bentinck's.

The chief Belvoir sires whose progeny appeared in the Kildares were "Singer," "Selim," "Lexicon," "Grappler" and "Fairplay." From Mr Foljambe came puppies by "Duster," "Ruler," "Bellman," "Bluecap," and "Dashwood." Lord

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Yarborough's "Nailer," "Vaultier," "Nathan" and "Painter" were well represented, as were Lord H. Bentinck's "Trumpeter," "Regulus" and "Foeman." Dams of note represented were the Duke of Rutland's "Rapture," "Remnant," "Rhapsody" and "Buxom."

Some leading hounds of the Kildares at this period are thus described by a contemporary writer:

"'Fingal,' black and tan by Mr Foljambe's 'Duster' out of his 'Famous,' is of the real stamp, being a very powerful bony hound without a bad point; 'Painter' by Lord Yarborough's 'Villager' out of his 'Parody' is a credit to the fashionable blood from which he is descended. 'Noble' by Lord Yarborough's 'Nathan' out of his 'Stately' by the Duke of Rutland's 'Singer' out of Lord Yarborough's 'Frolic,' is a rare specimen, and as good as he looks. The highly-bred 'Stately' by the Duke of Rutland's 'Singer' out of Lord Yarborough's 'Frolic,' is another very handsome hound and has a litter at walk by 'Fingal.' 'Flighty,' 'Flourish,' 'Fancy,' 'Fitful' and 'Faithful' by 'Fingal' out of 'Norma' by Lord Yarborough's 'Vaultier' out of his 'Notable' are a beautiful lot."

Mr Percy La Touche writes to me: "'Lexicon' was the best hound I ever saw; at one time he was sire of half the Kildare pack."

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While on the subject of hounds and management, I may say that on taking over the Mastership, Baron de Robeck went into some very careful calculations as to the proper feeding of hounds and of its cost. I think these particulars and his conclusions are worth setting out, for if not of any present interest they may be useful for purposes of comparison hereafter.

The Baron found, then, that the meal used in the kennels for the three months ending in July of 1862 for fifty and a half couple of hounds was 3 tons, 12 cwt, 6 stone, together with sixty-six carcasses. He noted that one pound of oatmeal or one and a half pound of Indian meal would make sufficient good stirabout for a hound's daily ration of that food. From the fact, too, that in the Duke of Rutland's establishment eighty couple of hounds consumed 280 carcasses in a year, he concluded that twelve carcasses for the Kildare pack per month should be ample.

The admirable Stephen Goodall continued huntsman, and an extract of the agreement signed by the Master and Huntsman will be of interest. Goodall received £110 a year in wages, with a house and six tons of coal. He had a red coat and waistcoat, two pairs of breeches, two of pants, hunting cap and whip yearly, and an allowance of £7 to find himself in boots and spurs. The perquisite

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of all draft hounds was his except such as the Master himself required to give away, and five shillings each for carcasses used at the kennels up to twelve a month together with the hides and bones, but excluding such as were presented to the Hunt by gentlemen. In the kennels he had the assistance of one feeder and the first whip, the second whip only attending the hounds at horse exercise. Good-all was allowed five shillings a night when sleeping out, and might order nothing for the kennels without permission.

While on the subject of management, I may perhaps quote some notes of Baron de Robeck on some of the routine expenses of the Hunt at this period. I find that stopping, minding and finds in the regular coverts cost £284 5s. and in the bye-earths £76 17s. For cubs in bye-earths £51 was paid; earth-warners' wages £24 10s., and a pension to old Nolan £15. These sums amount to £451 and are apart, of course, from poultry fund, keep of hounds and maintenance and pay of the Hunt servants and their horses. The poultry fund varied, but I find that it averaged £160 over a period of six seasons.

I find a single letter from the Baron to my father, Lord Naas, which relates to the beginning of his Mastership and may be of interest:

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Jan. 17th, 1865.

My dear Naas,

It is well known the hounds must leave Palmers-town by the 1st May. Anyway it would be dangerous to let Sam (Reynell) into the country; he would never give it up.

We have had good sport lately. To-day a very fine run and killed in the open. Found in banks of river at Stonebrook, and after a couple of turns went away by Stonebrook Lodge and Stonebrook House and across the Ballymore road by Well-field; by the Seasons Barretstown Hill, into Russborough; through Russelstown; crossed the river under Baltiboys, went along to close to Burgage Bridge and along the bottoms to the King's River and ran into him near the mountains. About two hours from find to finish; part fast, rest fine hunting run.

There appears to have been a doubt as to whether Baron de Robeck would continue after his first two seasons. There is no official reference to it, and such difficulties as presented themselves were certainly surmounted, but I find a letter from a member of the Hunt to my father which states the point at issue:

“ The hunting affairs for the future are about to become a sort of crisis. The Baron, I believe, is determined to hunt the country only three days a

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week, and that for £1,850. With T.C.'s subscription doubtful it will be quite impossible to get up the money for three days a week; easy to get £2,000 for four. The country, at all events this side of it, is anything but well supplied with foxes, and unless the Baron turns down extensively next year, there will be a positive dearth. Altogether, I think things look black.

"If possible, would you take the hounds again to hunt them yourself? You will never do it younger. You have tried your hand at it, and have succeeded most wonderfully, and I have not the slightest doubt of your killing more foxes than we can spare.

"The limited mail train would be of great help to you and a steady huntsman in the kennels would not spoil your hounds during the debates. I think of Ballinacrow Hill during October.

"I know Lady Naas will never forgive me for thinking of putting you on the spit again and of giving you plenty of turns when on. A stranger in Kildare would never do, you may depend upon that, unless indeed St Lawrence. At the meeting I hope to propose and carry a resolution to refer the Baron's proposition to a committee consisting of you, Lord Drogheda, P. Tynte, M. Aylmer, and E. Mansfield. Hunting the hounds yourself would be great economy."

It is a matter of history in Kildare that whatever feeling of unrest this letter represented subsided,

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and that the proposal if made came to nothing. Baron de Robeck hunted the country three days a week and showed continuous sport throughout his Mastership, an aspect of our subject which it is now time to consider.

Of the first years of his term I have very scanty particulars; his diary, usually so full, contains but brief mention of the sport enjoyed, or else there is a fuller diary for those years which has not reached me. Such notes, however, as are before me I may quote:

“ 1863. Jan. 14th. The Meath hounds meet at Naas and draw my country; gave them a very good day. Had a Hunt Ball that night. Feb. 19th. Thursday. I go to Meath to S. Reynell's for the meet with our hounds at Dunshoughlin. Had a good day's sport on Friday the 20th and killed a Meath fox.”

Those notes refer to a custom then in vogue of neighbouring packs of hounds meeting in each other's countries for an exchange of a day's sport. Upon a return visit by Mr Reynell to the Kildare country they ran a fox into Kill Churchyard and Mr Reynell wanted to break down the gate. This was not allowed and Mr Reynell declared it was not fair. I find an unconsciously humorous reference to Mr Reynell in a sporting paper of this period:

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“Mr Reynell who blows his own horn with no uncertain blast.”

“1863. April 15th. Wednesday. The last day of the season, a very good day and a great many strangers out. Had a very good season. One blank day.

“1864. April 25th. Last day's hunt. Had a good twenty-five minutes and killed. On the whole a fair season.”

From the autumn of 1866, however, I have full particulars in Baron de Robeck's diary of every day the hounds were out, and the chief difficulty is that of selection.

The autumn of 1866 opened with some good sport before the conventional “first meet” at Johnstown Inn. They were at Bert at Kilbride, Moore Abbey, Saunders Grove, and Ladenstown Bridge between October 25 and Tuesday, November 9, the first fixture at Johnstown. There was very good sport indeed at the Moore Abbey rendezvous. A find at Hybla crossed the lawn through the enclosures, went over the mill race, through Rogan's farm at Clondown, crossed the Kildare Road, on through Laragh, by the moat, over the dry walls, through Coolier and Navanstown and to ground in Mynagh, after a good gallop over a fine line of country.

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Dunmurrey was next drawn, the cover, Mr Medlicott's, the origin of which I have set out in the last chapter. They found at once, skirted the Curragh covert, over the Kildare and Newbridge road to Windmill Hill, when the fox ran round the skirts of Kildare town by the station through the Bishop's land. Passing the station, the line was over South Green, towards the hills, but being pressed he here changed his point through Rathwalkeen into Kyle, crossing the Limerick Road and the G. S. and W. Railway. From this point only two were with the hounds, Mr Exshaw and Richard Lyons, the Huntsman. They still went on at a great pace through the gorse at Sillot, where the fox broke at the south end and crossed the Shanaloon road into Tully. Here Lyons's horse came to grief, leaving Mr Exshaw with the hounds alone. He rode on through Maddenstown to Barnehill covert, where the hounds changed to a fresh fox, and seven couples streamed off across Kilberrin bog close to his brush. Here Mr Exshaw gave up, and Lyons recovered his hounds long after sunset after thirteen miles over an almost impracticable country.

The conventional first meet, on the following Tuesday at Johnstown Inn, provided only moderate sport. Kerdiffstown was drawn blank; three foxes were found in Palmerstown, but would not go

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away, Kill Hill, for a wonder, yielded no fox, but at Kiltel they found and ran to Johnstown. Here a fresh fox was found and with the hounds well up ran through Newcastle and on to Castlebagot, where hounds were drawn off after sunset.

It may not be out of place to take advantage of the sporting papers, which now begin to help me, in order to give a list of the personnel of a first meet in the middle of Baron de Robeck's mastership.

At Johnstown, accordingly, on that November 9, 1866, were the Baron himself, of course, Lord and Lady Drogheda, Lord Clonmell, Lord St Lawrence, Mr E. S. Cole, Sir Ed. Kennedy and his sons, Mr Robert and Mr William Kennedy, Sir James Higginson, Mr F. E. J. Macdonnell, Mrs and the Misses Beaman, Mr William and Mr Arthur Owen, Major Carden (then Master of the Queen's County hounds), Mr E. S. R. Smythe, Mr Horace Rochfort, Mr Richard Moore, Mr Charles Hoffmann, Mr George Mansfield, Mr and Mrs R. Cornwall, Mr E. A. Mansfield, Captain and Mrs Tuthill, Mr J. W. Wakefield, Capt. Warburton, Mr Augustus Warburton, Mr Isaac Maunders, Mr R. W. Maunders, Mr Thomas and Mr Hans Hendrick, Mr P. J. Sweetman, Mr J. P. Tynte, Mr F. Tynte, Capt. Moore, Mr P. Nolan, Mr F. M. Carroll, Mr Hugh Henry, Mr C. T. Cramer Roberts, Mr David O'Connor Henchy, Capt. and Mrs Davis, Capt.

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Paget Butler, Capt. Slacke, Mr Chas Palmer, Mr Robertson, Major Wilkin, A.D.C., Alderman Lambert, Capt. Sheddon, Capt. and Mrs Hoey, Mr Wm Meredith, Capt. Raynsford, Mr Arthur French, Mr James Whitelaw, Mr W. B. Brownrigg, Mr Allan McDonagh, Mr White, Mr T. D. Waters, Mr E. and Mr J. Hanlon, Mr and Miss Exshaw, Mr Alexr Love, Mr P. Farrell, Mr J. Farrell, Mr W. Farrell, Mr B. Fitzpatrick, Mr T. J. and Mr James Fitzpatrick, Mr John D. Blowney, Mr S. Pallin, Mr D. Paley, Mr E. Molloy, the Rev. Mr Murphy, Mr T. McEvoy, Mr W. Bull, Mr D. Ritchie, Mr Darker, Mr W. Boothman, Mr C. D. Irwin, Mr S. Boyce, Mr Linde, Mr John Comerford, Mr H. Aylmer, and others.

There was an excellent run two days later, when, after meeting at Blessington and drawing Baltiboy's blank, they found in Downshire. The fox got well away and crossed the brook at Glending and headed for Elverstown, the pace being very fast. Wheeling, he skirted the Ring of Athgarret, and, turning across the Naas road, got back into Downshire, which, however, he ran through without the slightest check. The time up to this point was twenty-five minutes. He headed for Caureen Hill and on to the Slate Quarries road, and the hounds, with a breast-high scent, ran clean into him over the Old Punchbowl, after a fine run of just one

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hour. The distance from find to finish was reckoned at ten Irish miles, and no ploughed field was crossed throughout. There were only three up at the kill, Mr W. Kennedy, Mr Alexander Love and Mr Anthony Allen, jun.

November ended with a long hunting run from a find in the woods on the Kildare road near Ballyvarney. Breaking on the north side, the fox crossed from Seleaska to Duneaney, on to Ballyvarney, over the Nurney road as if for Harristown, turned to the right over Kildangan, crossing the Carlow railway and into the cover at the railway bridge, then through some evergreens near the castle to Richardstown, where there was a longish check, which enabled the fox to reach Kilpatrick covert. There, however, the hounds found him, and he broke for Toole's farm through Killeen and after passing through Mr Water's enclosure was killed dead beat in the open after a run of just two hours. The scent was poor and the pace not fast, but the new Huntsman, Dick Lyons, who had succeeded Goodall, was much praised for his handling of the pack. He never interfered, but allowed them to hunt their game without any lifting at all.

Contemporary reports point to an abundance of foxes all over the country in 1866; they were too plentiful, in fact, and there is frequent mention of chopping a brace before getting a third to break in

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covers widely separated. This happened at Elverstown in the first week of December, when a third fox gave one of those long runs in the hill country for which the Blessington meet is so famous. The fox broke for Slievethoul, but being headed wheeled first for the cover, but then turned to the left for Punchestown racecourse, passed over Mr Meredith's fine grass land, skirted Byrne's farmhouse and went on fast as if for Stonebrook. Here he turned to the right and went straight for Sillagh bog, which he crossed, and, wheeling to the left, skirted Dowdenstown and on to Elverstown. He passed through the cover and again broke for Slievethoul, skirted Downshire, went down the coach road, which crossed half a mile beyond Blessington, where the hounds were called off in the dark. It was a fine hunting run of just two hours and twenty minutes.

Sport continued very good throughout December. On the 8th hounds found in Kilteel, where the fox broke on the Johnstown side, and gave a very fast twenty-five minutes without a check to Arthurstown, going through the cover and on as if for Burnt Furze, but turned to the left and ran within a field of Newtown Old House. Here he turned to the right, and again to the left and pointed straight for Tipper, where he turned to the left again, then to the right and straight for Cradockstown. Here

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he headed for Killashee, but then for Gowran Grange, through the Baron's plantations and on towards Mullicash; then back to Killashee, where the hounds were drawn off in the dusk.

I must finish the month and the year 1866 with a note of one or two more good runs. Hounds met at Castletown on the 20th and found at once in Moonacoola. The fox broke quickly and gave a fast gallop towards Ardrass, but changing his mind before he reached the cover he went on as if for Killadoon, but again wavered, and headed for Castletown, crossing the wall on the Leixlip side of the demesne. He then ran on close by Leixlip, taking a ring by the Duke of Leinster's demesne to Taghadoc fields, where he crossed the road and faced for the cover. He was killed in the open a few hundred yards further on after a brilliant run of an hour and ten minutes with scarcely a check, except that at the Castletown wall.

The 27th saw what is described as the run of the season. The meet was Dunlavin, and Bowery Hill, a cover maintained free by Mr J. Pratt Tynte at that time, who also paid the earthstopper's wages and gave him a sovereign for every fox found during the season. This draw provided £3 for that fortunate earthstopper on that particular day. The third fox broke at a racing pace for Logatrina, but changed his point as if for Halverstown, over

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Watershill, past the earths at Grange Beg at a still faster pace, by Coldwells and over a fine country to Cryhelp. He passed straight through the cover without the semblance of a check, past the school-house at Rathattan, through Whiteleas and to ground in Mountcashel after a brilliant run of thirteen miles over a grass country; time, one hour and seventeen minutes. The Baron, Mr Fortescue Tynte, Mr R. Moore, Mr A. Allen, Sir Jas Higginson, Major Greene and Captain Humfrey saw the run from find to finish.

Hunting during January of 1867 was much interfered with by frost at the beginning and end of the month. On the 10th I find an entry of interest in Baron de Robeck's diary: "Heard of the death of W. La Touche, sent the hounds home," a mark of respect to a member of the Kildare Hunt Club, to whom, as is abundantly clear from what I have put down on former pages, the Hunt owes an inestimable debt.

From what I can gather, the sport during the spring of this year continued very good, without, however, any run of exceptional brilliance. Foxes still continued to be found in too great plenty and kills, apart from chopping, were rarer than they ought to have been. It would seem that scent was not as good as usual in the Kildare country, and there is a constant tale of checks and slow hunting

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which often resulted in the loss of the fox at a late hour, and hounds being drawn off after dark. One or two days' sport may be quoted as fairly representative of many more.

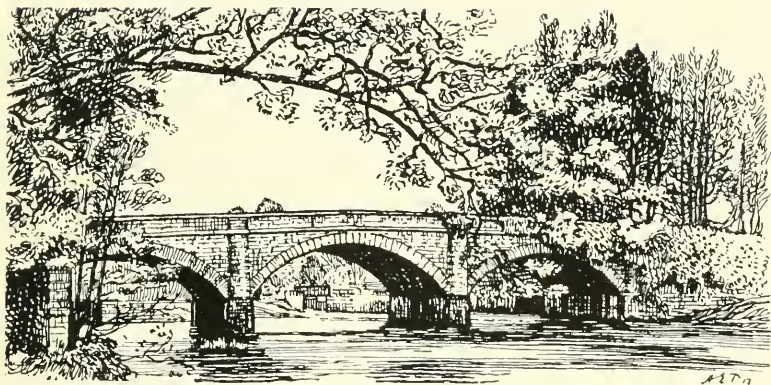
On January 24, when the bone of the frost was still in the ground, they met at Naas, drew Osbertstown, ran a fox a short ring back into the cover and lost; went on to Killashee, where three foxes were on foot immediately the hounds went in. One broke in the direction of Punchestown, followed a little later by another, but hounds got on a third, which after a break towards Killashee house and a return to cover at last went off for Pipers Hill, but wheeled two fields from the cover, where the hounds ran into him. Sillot Hill gave a fox, which ran into Herbertstown and was lost, but the cover provided another and at last broke at a very fast pace across the bog to the right of Mr Carey's house, past the lodge and on to Sillot, where he dwelt for a few minutes and caused a short check. They hit him off again close to the coach road, across the bottoms near Dunstown Wood, through Harristown demesne at the Carnalway gate, straight through the plantation inside the wall at a great pace, over the Liffey, under the bridge through Newberry demesne and plantations, back across the river, on to Kilcullen, across the river a third time, and into Castlemartin to ground. Part of the

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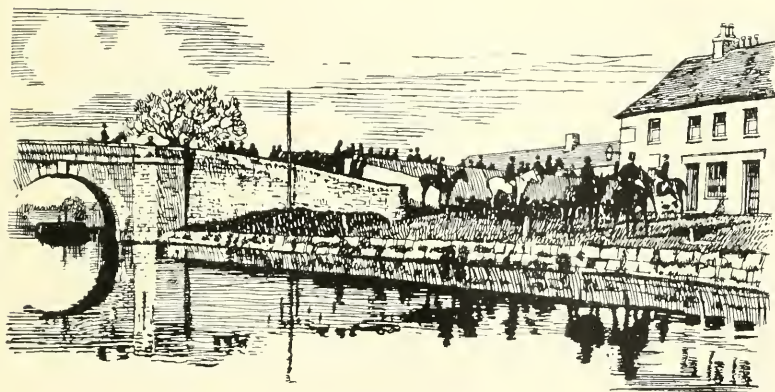
latter half of the run was extremely fast, but the scenting was bad on the whole, and hounds did not hunt in their usual style.

A week later, with the meet at Ballysax, there was a good hunting run from Moor Hill, after pottering work at Martinstown, owing to too many foxes and an unstopped earth at Halverstown, followed by a blank at Cryhelp. Moor Hill, however, yielded a good fox, who ran as if for Hollywood, after a circuit of four or five fields, through the demesne of Moor Hill, out at Mr Kilbee's gate and across the bottoms at a rattling pace, into and through Gilltown. He then crossed the wall a few perches from the cover and went on at a great pace to Bolabeg gate, where the hounds had to be drawn, as neither horsemen nor hounds could proceed further in the dark.

The meet at Sallins, a Monday at the end of February, the hounds drew Turnings, and found at once. He raced straight through Turnings, across Reade's farm, through Farrell's farm at Sherlockstown, through Cullen's farm, where he wheeled to the right to Bodentown, past Wolf Tone's grave, through Lady Hill at a great pace and on to Blackhall, where he either gained a rabbit burrow, or was lost. There were short runs ending in losses, though at a great pace, from Castlekeely and Osbertstown, the whole day being very typical of



STRAFFAN BRIDGE.



SALLINS.

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the sport for the remaining five weeks of the spring of 1867. Thus with the meet at Saggart, for a wonder, Belgard, Coolmine, Castlebagot and Johnstown were all drawn blank. Kildeel, however, provided a fox, which broke as for Johnstown and headed at a terrific pace for Badger Hill through the bottoms. He then wheeled to the right and went through Badger Hill fields, over into Collierstown, and headed for Coolmine. At the herd's house he turned short, and ran straight for the road for Slievethoul, where there was a short check, but the hounds hit it off again. He then doubled to the left towards Gouchers and straight for Cogan's plantation, wheeled right-about, and back for Collierstown and was lost. Another fox from Gouchers broke across the Blessington road at a rattling pace, and, heading for Talbotstown, ran straight for Butler Mountain, then on for Kippure Mountain, where the field turned for home. It was midnight before Lyons got his hounds back to the kennels.

Here is an account of a good run from a Tuesday's meet at Dunlavin. A fox was found at Ballintaggart and went away at once to the right as if for Sprattstown, taking a circuit round and through Rathsallagh demesne, on as if for Whitestown, when he turned to the left and went on as if for Dunlavin. Before reaching it, however, he wheeled to the right to Blackrock, and on parallel with the

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road from Tynte Park to Dunlavin. The hounds raced him through the demesne of Tynte Park, and being closely pressed he went on to Whitestown cover, where he dwelt for a few moments, but went on for the Rotton Hills, at the back of Sayer's farm at Dunlavin, where he got to ground after a full hour and forty minutes. The pace throughout was very fast, and the checks, considering the length of the run, insignificant. I read that this one run satisfied all for the day, and the hounds were drawn off as early as two o'clock.

A week later there was a run described as "the run of the season" from the Gormanstown meet. Hatfield was drawn blank, but Bowery Hill as usual yielded a good fox. He broke at once, and with hounds well on went away at a great pace as if for Gormanstown, but changed his line and headed for Gilltown, but turned to the right just short of the demesne and crossed the road between Moor Hill and Gormanstown, went on a line parallel with the road between Gormanstown Chapel and Dunlavin. He crossed the Dunlavin road and into McDonald's Farm, by which time the pace had considerably thinned the field, on very fast through Mr Kilbea's grounds and into Moorhill demesne, through Moorhill cover without a moment's pause and headed for Annefield. Here he turned to the left, went straight through Harristown demesne,

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along the edge of the Liffey, which was too swollen for any attempt to cross, down to the bridge, where the hounds were running with a breast-high scent, across the road into Sallymount demesne, where they ran into him in the open. The run was of just forty-seven minutes, but the pace throughout and the absence of anything which could be called a check, made it by common consent the most brilliant of the season.

Sport indeed continued excellent throughout the season. There was a run from Kill Hill, where a fox broke, and ran straight for Collierstown Wood, a distance of six Irish miles, as straight as a crow flies, without a single check, a run which reduced the field of fully 300 which had assembled at a fashionable Naas meet to thirteen when he went to ground. Another run in the middle of March was almost as good as anything through the season. They met at Maynooth, and drew Laragh, where they found at once. He broke at a rattling pace for Painstown, through Mr Aylmer's grounds and straight on to Donadea without the semblance of a check, on for Mount Armstrong, into Mount Egan and on again to Downings, where he got to ground. The first part of the run was thirty-eight minutes, ended by a slight check at Donadea, but the quality of the run will be appreciated by the fact that they went fourteen miles from find to finish in fifty minutes, including the check I have mentioned.

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On the following Wednesday Downings was drawn, and a fox found in the plantations before reaching the cover. He took a ring round a very ugly close bit of country, and after skirting the Bog of Allen went into Donore at the corner near the Cock Bridge, and out again at a terrific pace into Castlekeely cover. Time up to this, one hour and twelve minutes. After three or four minutes he broke and headed for the aqueduct at Waterstown and got to ground at last in a rabbit-burrow in Osbertstown Hill.

There was an immense gathering at Hortlands on February 10 notwithstanding the weather; there was a cold, steely rain falling, drifted snow still lay in the ditches, and the Wicklow mountains were still covered. But the fine surroundings of Hortlands, large areas of grass intersected by safe wide ditches with solid, sloping banks on either side, and the experience of the past two seasons, in which the cream of the cream of Kildare sport has been found in this wide basin, made many a sportsman from the neighbouring counties of Meath and Westmeath attend this tryst at all hazards.

From Hortland Gorse, which is thickening to a very good covert, a good fox broke away very quickly and ran, after one or two preparatory bursts, towards Cappagh and Newtown and past the strong wide gorse of Ballycaghan. Before, how-

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ever, he had come to the latter place he had revenged himself on many of his enemies by leading them over a small bit of soft semi-boggy land, where the ditches made for drainage purposes were wide, deep and with takings-off of the worst character, save in a few spots where there were causeways. These thinned the field enormously. Off Ballycaghan the Hortland fox was joined by a vixen and they ran past an ancient burying-place in Indian file for a field or two, when they separated. Some six or eight couples of hounds followed the vixen, and unfortunately rolled her over within a couple of fields of the upper road to Hortlands. The rest of the pack—the bitches were the performers of the day—stuck to their old love, and ran him for a long time before they could be stopped.

Mr Steuart Duckett has very kindly told me of a curious incident which happened at the end of the Baron's Mastership. "A fox went away from Ballyhook," he says, "with hounds close to him. He ran the far side of a small bank at the corner of which was a gap. A man named Wilson, a brother of that gallant old lady, Mrs O'Neil of Athy, started off beside the pack on the near side of the fence, met the fox crossing the gap, galloped over him and stretched him out dead."

Mr Duckett adds: "Do you know that your father, Lord Naas, challenged the whole of Ireland

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to produce a man to race him over the Punchestown course? I don't know the distance, but both were to start mounted and lead over every fence. But he barred Robert Watson. Robert Watson told me this himself."

After six seasons, during which he had showed excellent sport, the Baron, to the regret of all Kildare sportsmen, relinquished the hounds in the spring of 1868 to Sir Edward Kennedy, the elder son of the great Master, Sir John, whose long reign from 1814 to 1841 we have already considered at length. I cannot do better, I think, than quote a contemporary opinion of Baron de Robeck, which I find in the *Irish Times* of a date near the end of his term.

"Just what a master of foxhounds should be, kind and jovial with his field, liberal with his purse, courteous and considerate to strangers, affable with the farmers, and bent upon showing sport if sport can be shown; and though last, not least, the best of landlords, which increases his popularity very much amongst the occupiers of land, who always welcome him wherever he goes."

It is pleasant to find from Baron de Robeck's diary that these qualities were acknowledged in a tangible form at the conclusion of his Mastership. Under the date March 17, 1869, I read: "I was pre-

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sented by the members of the Hunt with two handsome candelabras, silver, and by the people of Naas, non-members, with a handsome silver kettle. The presentation took place in the town hall."

I have at various points in my undertaking set out some of the metrical effusions in which Irishmen are notoriously prodigal, and conclude this chapter with one which is certainly not the worst of these efforts. It was given to Baron de Robeck in the year 1850 by his old friend, A. A. Garnett, Esq., Capt. 8th (the King's) Regiment.

PARSON HOG.

'Tis Parson Hog he does employ
The burden of my song, Sir,
A single life he does enjoy
With constitution strong, Sir;
He'll sit and drink, he'll tip the wink,
He'll bet you fifty pound, Sir;
He'll love his lass and drink his glass
And tally ho the hounds, Sir.
And tally ho the hounds, Sir, etc.

And every day he can afford
To dine on boiled and roast, Sir,
And then as great as any lord
He'll drink his fav'rite toast, Sir,

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It is his wish both night and morn
In punch his care to drown, Sir,
But in the morn he'll join the horn
And tally ho the hounds, Sir.

St Stephen's Day, this holy man,
This priest he went to mass, Sir,
He heard the music of the hounds
And saw the beagles pass, Sir;
He closed his book, his cloth forsook,
Aside he threw his gown, Sir,
And mounts his mare to hunt the hare
And tally ho the hounds, Sir.

One day a couple came to wed,
When puss came by in view, Sir,
He threw his surplice o'er his head,
And straight did her pursue, Sir;
In vain they pray that he would stay;
They were not yet half bound, Sir,
He said they might to bed that night
And tally ho the hounds, Sir.

And every day he goes to mass
This priest pulls on his boots, Sir,
And should the foxhounds chance to pass
He'll join them in pursuit, Sir;
He'll risk a fall o'er hedge or wall,
To him there are no bounds, Sir,
And if he can, he'll lead the van,
And tally ho the hounds, Sir.

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This priest he leads a godly life,
He ne'er forgets the poor, Sir,
The aged and the wanderer
All flock around his door, Sir;
He gives relief to soothe the grief
Of sickly and of sound, Sir,
But in the morn he'll join the horn
And tally ho the hounds, Sir.

CHAPTER XI

SIR EDWARD KENNEDY, 1868-1874

THE terms upon which Sir Edward Kennedy took over the Hunt were set out in the report of a meeting of the members held at the Royal Hotel, Naas, on November 12, 1869. They differ little from those upon which the Hunt had been conducted by former Masters. The guarantee was raised to £1,900, and the Master undertook to provide seven days hunting a fortnight. The accounts for the preceding season show a subscription of £1,432 only; but field money to the amount of £404 odd, brought the income for the season 1868-9 to the sum mentioned as necessary, and Sir Edward's Mastership accordingly opened without any anxiety on the score of ways and means. I note in the accounts a donation of fifty guineas from the 9th Lancers, and as usual at similar meetings there were enthusiastic sportsmen who came forward as guarantors for various sums beyond their subscriptions, in case the general fund did not reach the



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amount anticipated. These public-spirited gentlemen were Sir James Power, Mr J. P. Tynte, Mr W. H. F. Cogan, Mr R. Moore, Baron de Robeck, Mr E. A. Mansfield and Mr D. Mahony. I may add that the expenditure for the season just passed was exactly £1,900, and there was a balance of £139 in the hands of the Treasurer.

Sir Charles Edward Bayly Kennedy was in his forty-eighth year when he took the hounds. Any introductory remarks concerning one of his name would be superfluous to any of my readers in the Kildare country, and to any others who may have followed me thus far, the weight of the name of Kennedy in all matters connected with sport in the county must be manifest. Was it not Sir Edward's father, Sir John, who kept the hounds from 1814 to 1841, and left a record of every day's hunting during the greater part of that period; and did not his younger brother, Mr William Kennedy, worthily maintain the great sporting tradition of the family by hunting the country with the greatest success from 1847 to 1854? His other brother, too, Mr Robert Kennedy, conspicuous in the field during the *régimes* of eight Masters and indefatigable always in promoting the interests of the Hunt, is still happily with us, and to his great kindness and wonderful memory I owe most of anything which may be found interesting in my undertaking.

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It may, nevertheless, be of interest to future generations of Kildare sportsmen to note down such slight particulars of the personality of the third Master of the family of Kennedy as are clear in the recollection of those who knew him. "Sir Edward Kennedy," writes one of these, "whose father almost founded the Kildares as a subscription pack, was a little short, wiry man, the very cut and weight for a first-class performer across country. He rode both well and hard, and his whole soul was in his hounds and their performances, and nothing upset him so much as the sublime indifference to the pack exhibited by the majority of the field, whether on wheels or hunters. He worked very hard at keeping the country, and was very hospitable to everybody, especially to the guild of sportsmen."

Like other Masters of hounds in Kildare, Sir Edward was a warm supporter of the Turf, and not only owned several racers, but enjoyed a considerable reputation as an amateur rider.

Sir Edward had also the admirable habit of his family of keeping a hunting diary, and I have before me at this moment such a diary extending over the last three years of his Mastership, the seasons of 1871 to 1874. It includes also a résumé of the total finds and kills during the whole of his term from the year 1868 to 1874, information which will enable me to make some interesting comparisons

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between the results of the hunting in Kildare between that and other periods.

The diary beginning in 1871 is quite complete as regards fixtures, dates, finds and kills, but unfortunately contains few particulars as to actual runs. Here and there, however, I can quote enough to give a general idea of the sport shown. Thus, on December 12, 1871, "A fine 47 minutes from Belgard and killed near 12th Lock" and "a sharp 20 minutes to Peamount" will give a very definite idea of the day's sport to those who know the Kildare country. In the same month there is an entry of the performance of a single hound which is of interest, "Chopped at Sprattstown and ran another to Ballitore, back to cover, and killed single handed by 'President' at Ballinure." Sport continued average during the rest of the year, but was much interfered with by frost and snow during the early part of January, 1872, but sport was good later on in the month. On the 17th I read, "Good run from Elverstown to ground at Baltiboys"; and on the 27th, "Good 55 minutes from Rathcoffee to Donadea and killed at Straffan; Lodge Park to Rathcoffee and on to Mount Armstrong, took hounds off there."

The difficulty of the behaviour of the field which was mentioned at the opening of this chapter by a writer I quoted was probably increasing by this

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period. Railway facilities alone brought greater numbers of strangers into the Kildare country for the day as time went on, and such an influx must always include a large proportion of inexperienced sportsmen. There is, therefore, no need to suppose that Sir Edward was unduly sensitive in the matter when one reads that he often had to complain of the way in which his foxes were headed or his hounds overridden. Certainly his diary contains many entries pointing to the frequent committal of atrocities of that description. "Fox headed so often at Boston took the hounds away." I read at this period. Again, "Lost owing to the field." "Chopped at Moon and Ballycore; if anyone to blame it was the footpeople who headed foxes back." There are also some very human entries referring to individuals. "Soon lost from Giltown owing to Mr — carrying on the hounds up a road." Also, "Took hounds off at Punchestown, as Mr — overrode them!" The gentleman named is the same who made the mistake at Giltown.

But such little annoyances are the lot of most Masters and are soon forgotten. Sport continued quite average during the rest of the season. The last day of that season is thus described. "Very fast from Kerdiffstown, by Palmerstown, by Baronrath over Oughterard Hill to Cross Keys "; and there is a note of a day, a week or so earlier, which has a

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certain eloquence. " March 21st. First blank day since I took the Kildare Hounds."

The following season, 1872-3, was distinguished by some runs of which one would like fuller particulars, " " Tinorin to Ballycore on to Moon and back to Tinorin, good run, about ten miles " for instance. There is an ominous entry in December of 1872, " Could not draw Narraghmore as poison had been set there," though it is fair to say that throughout the history of the Hunt I have found very little mention of the laying of poison. " Belgard to ground three miles from Dublin; Castlebagot to Athgoe," too, in January, 1873, is an interesting entry, and two days later, " One hour and forty minutes from Devies by Dollardstown and Kilkea to ground near Knockrow " is mention of a good run such as Devies very often provided. Later, too, from a Dunlavin meet they ran a fox from Bellavilla and lost beyond Downings.

Generally speaking, the records of this period point to a plenty of foxes, but relatively few kills. In the autumn of 1872 I notice they were seventeen times out in the cubbing, found thirty-one, ran twelve to ground and killed three. Of the regular hunting during November and December there is no better record in respect of foxes killed. During that period Sir Edward found seventy-two foxes, ran nine to ground and killed eight, leaving fifty-

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five unaccounted for. That is not a good average, and I think it was a question whether the Master was well served by his huntsman, Dick Lyons, who came with the hounds from Baron de Robeck, only stayed a season with Sir Edward, and his successor, Scarth, was perhaps of less help to the Master. Scarth was an English yeoman in origin but came to the Kildare Hunt from the Kilkenny pack. He was a fine rider, and it is said was so careful of his turn-out and appearance that he wore no socks or stockings lest they should spoil the shape of his boots. Scarth was undoubtedly a fine rider, but his heart was not in hunting; he was, in fact, devoted to shooting, and eventually, apparently decided to follow his natural bent, for the last heard of him in Kildare was that he was in Newfoundland doing nothing but gratify his taste for the gun. Scarth was a single man and lived in the house at Johnstown. He left owing to some dissension among the servants, and it is no secret that the more enthusiastic among Kildare hunting men did not greatly regret his going, as his taste for another sport made it impossible to do himself or the hounds justice in the field. I think, therefore, that the very poor proportion of foxes accounted for at this time may be owing in part to the huntsman.

The autumn of 1873 opened indifferently. Sir Edward frequently records bad weather and lack of

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scent. The first note of a good run is dated December 9, "Fine run from Cryhelp through Tynte Park and killed one field from Ballyhook," followed three days later by "a good thirty-five minutes from Tinorin to ground the other side of Baltinglass." "Took hounds away from Curragh, the field behaved so badly" is another note of a grievance I have already mentioned. On the 23rd "Ryndville to near Rainstown and back to ground; Ballycahan to Cappagh, Knockanaley, Hortlands; a very good run." Here, too, is a record of interest, "Fox would not break from Belgard; Castlebagot to ground at Peamount, ran two to ground here and ran one to Gouchers; took hounds off in the dark. Largest field ever known in Kildare."

"Jan. 20th, 1874. Gouchers to Johnstown, on to Kilteel, by Collierstown, back to Gouchers, on to Brittas Pond, which he swam over" is a brief note of what must have been a good day, though ending, as so often, in a loss. In the same week, "A fine run from Sheriffs Hill to ground at Burton Hall, Co. Carlow, one hour and forty-five minutes" also records a good day. One would also like further particulars of the run described as follows: "From Tallaght Hill up the mountains and lost ten couple of hounds; out all night." On March 23 there is again a note of another blank day, the second only recorded during Sir Edward's Mastership.

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I have spoken of the synopsis left by Sir Edward of the results of his hunting during the six seasons he had the hounds, and this, perhaps, is the place to glance at it.

Apart from cubhunting, the days hunted by the Kildare hounds from the autumn of 1868 to the spring of 1874 were 403, or sixty-seven a season, giving the usual Kildare average of seven days a fortnight. The finds were 970, or a little over two a day, let us say that number for every two days and three every third day. The record of kills is a poor one, taken either on its merits or compared with former periods of the Hunt of which there is accurate record. Kills in the six seasons under review amounted only to 152, or little more than one out of six foxes found. There were 273 accounted for by having been run to ground, leaving 545 lost, or more than half of the foxes found.

In this chapter, where I am near the end of the annals of the Kildare hounds, which, for a variety of reasons, I think it advisable to close with the reigns of masters deceased, it may be instructive to compare Sir Edward's record of finds and kills with those of his father and his brother, already set out on a former page. I do this not in any spirit of criticism, but because the results may suggest causes for certain effects which may have an enduring interest for sportsmen of the present generation.

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I find, then, that Sir John Kennedy and his two sons, Mr William and Sir Edward Kennedy, had practically the same fortune in the matter of finds. Leaving out fractions, they each had an average of two finds a day. If we take fractions into account Sir Edward was the best off. He found three foxes every third day, his brother, Mr William, three every tenth day of hunting, and Sir John three every fifth day.

But there is a great discrepancy in the proportion of foxes killed to those found during the three periods under consideration. Sir John's kills were slightly better than one in three; Mr William Kennedy a little better than one in three; while Sir Edward only accounted for one in six, barely, indeed, for one in seven foxes found.

What, then, was the reason for the falling-off during a period of a quarter of a century in which the country had been very carefully nursed and was certainly not lacking in well-kept coverts? Mr William Kennedy himself left some remarks upon the subject a year or two after his brother had given up the hounds. In some blank pages at the end of one of the volumes of his diary from which I have already quoted his eulogy of Mr Wm La Touche I find the following remarks.

“ Novr. 12th. 1878. The ground covered with

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snow, and our hunting stopped after one week's hunting. Although the weather was fine, the ground in good order, although quantities of foxes were found during the week in every part of the country, the hounds were totally unable to hunt them and actually lost every fox they found with one exception, as they marked a fox to ground in Ballinure Churchyard, but did not hunt him.

“ Having nothing to do and trying to account why it is that of late years in Kildare our hounds have rarely been able to kill a fox in the open, I took down this book into which I have not looked for years and in which is written the last two years of my Mastership, to try with its help to solve the problem.”

Here Mr Kennedy analyses the records of his hunting, which I have set out above and need not repeat. He finishes, however, with the remark, “ so that of 262 foxes hunted I only lost 85, not quite a third. That is a good average for any huntsman, so that it cannot be that our country is a bad scenting one. What is it?

“ I believe because our hounds are bad, and since the lamented death of Wm La Touche, have been getting worse and worse until now they are composed of drafts from second and third-rate English kennels.

“ Our present Master is not to blame for such a state of things, and as no hounds have been bred

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in the country, no one can have good hounds without breeding them. Puppies, like every other young animal, must have milk. How many cows have been kept at the kennels? If any, who have seen the pups get the new milk? To breed successfully there must be knowledge, trouble and expense, and no one in Ireland ever took so much trouble, ever expended a tithe of the money or had a hundredth part of the knowledge of my late friend Wm La Touche. No wonder that without him, our hounds have become what they are."

This is a very pessimistic reflection not only upon fox-hunting in Kildare, but also upon fox-hunting in the abstract. The only logical deduction to be drawn from it is that without a man of Mr W. La Touche's exceptional gifts to look after the hounds and devote his whole life to the care and improvement of the pack that pack must deteriorate and the quality of the sport decline. That is a proposition which would be very hard to maintain either in Kildare or elsewhere. It occurred to me to send a copy of Mr Kennedy's remarks to Mr Percy La Touche, Mr Wm La Touche's nephew, and ask his opinion upon them. Every member of the Hunt will know that I could consult no better authority. He has been good enough to send me the following notes.

" During my uncle's life the relations between

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landlord and tenant were much more agreeable than they have since become, and all my father's tenants of any standing used to walk puppies. Of course it is a disadvantage to a pack not being able to breed their own hounds, at any rate from a spectacular point of view; but our inability to put out a large number of puppies is not the only factor that militates against killing foxes in Kildare. Mr Osbaldestone's 'Farrier' was a draft hound, and so were 'Lexicon,' 'Nathan,' 'Hornet' and 'Saladin,' the four best hounds I ever saw in Kildare. Drainage, high farming, artificial manure, stronger fences, larger fields, and the increased use of wire all tend to make it more difficult to kill a fox. Of the above, I think that drainage has more to say to the difficulties of hunting than anything. No land carries such scent as a rushy field, and an enormous area of Kildare has been drained within my memory by the Duke of Leinster, my father and other landlords. Also the country was less enclosed. I have often heard my father say that in his time you could ride from Ballymore Eustace to Dublin without jumping a fence."

These seem to me very valuable comments on Mr Kennedy's rather gloomy reflections and suggest some very good reasons for the increased difficulty in killing foxes during Sir Edward's Mastership and since. As I have said, his huntsman may have been a contributory factor during part

SIR EDWARD KENNEDY, 1868-1874

of the period; I am sure it is unnecessary to seek for a cause in any deterioration of the pack. Sir Edward himself was devoted to hounds, and was fonder of seeing them hunt than of hard riding for its own sake, and it is a matter of history that he took all sorts of pains with the kennels. I find a contemporary account of the pack which shews the measures he took for its improvement. As I have seen during the Baron de Robeck's Mastership, it consisted chiefly of blood drawn from the Belvoir, Mr Foljambe's and Lord Henry Bentinck's packs. Later this was crossed with the Earl of Wemyss's. Sir Edward added drafts from the Holderness pack. A stallion hound, "Napier" by Belvoir "Notary" out of "Cowslip" was one of these. "Plunder" by "Pilgrim" out of "Nightshade," "Wanderer" by "Sampson," dam "Winifred," were other sire hounds. Of the bitches, "Bridesmaid" by "Napier," "Royal," "Sprightly" and "Nelly" were all fine hounds from the Holderness. In addition to these Sir Edward bought four brace from the Quorn, which combined the blood of the Grove "Duster," Mr Hall's "Tarquin," Lord Yarborough's "Nathan" and "Marmion," Lord Fitzhardinge's "Cromwell," and Mr Drake's "Flourish" and "Hurricane."

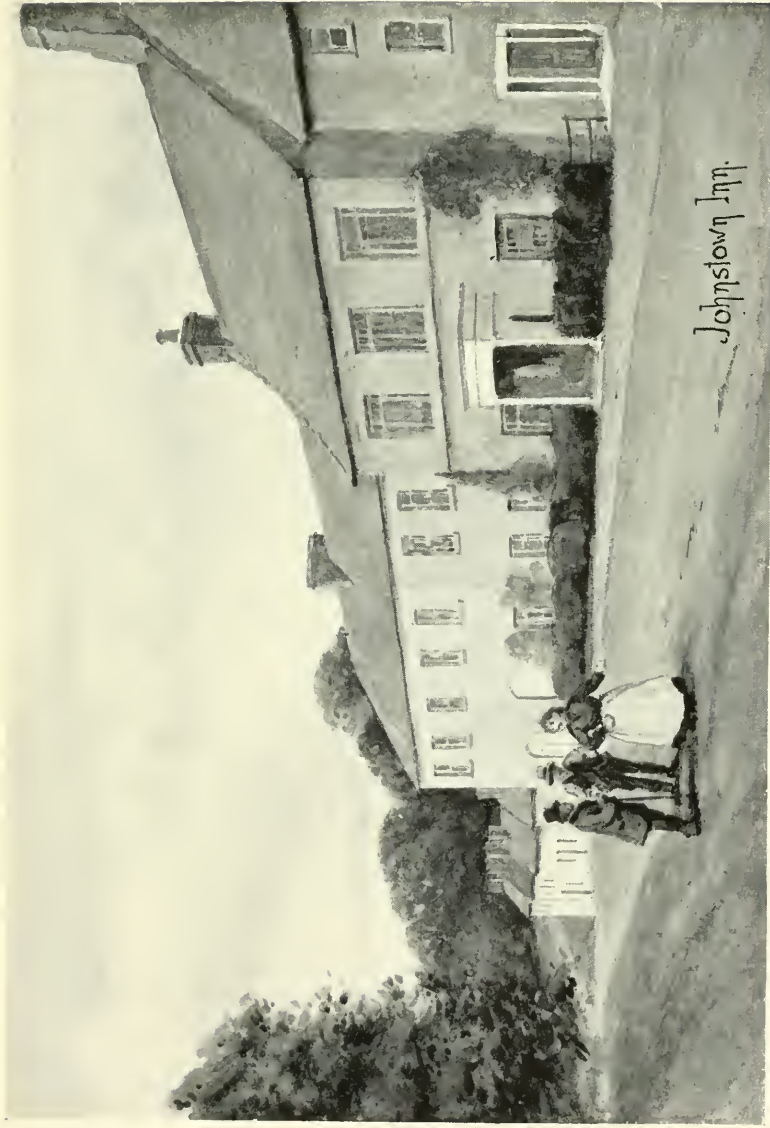
Whatever may have been the deficiencies in the matter of kills, Sir Edward undoubtedly showed

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consistent sport throughout his six seasons, was a very good houndsman and spent freely in improving the pack. When his time came to retire he handed over a country teeming with foxes, a first-rate huntsman, and a pack of hounds which enabled his successor to show capital sport from the beginning.

I shall here give an account from the *Irish Times* of a typical first meet near the end of Sir Edward Kennedy's Mastership. The writer gives an interesting glance at the personnel of the Hunt at this period, and writes very appreciatively of the sport in the country usually associated with the opening meet of the season.

“Johnstown Inn may have been quite a place, as the Yankees say, in the old posting days, but it looks now played out. The hounds have already arrived, and the bitch pack, of which Kildare is so proud, are out to-day. Level as if turned out by a machine, every couple almost as like as Giroflé and Girofla, yet each with an individuality of its own, muscular and strong as many a dog pack, with the prevailing shade of Belvoir tan to attest their origin and pedigree. Will Freeman the huntsman, a light man on Prima Donna, is said to fill right worthily the office which Stephen Goodall illustriously filled for so many years, and William Nevard and George Smart, his lieutenants, are



JOHNSTOWN INN.

SIR EDWARD KENNEDY, 1868-1874

apparently as well mounted and turned out as any Hunt servants can be.

“ Among the occupants of Lord Clonmell’s carriage are Sir Michael Hicks Beach who represents right worthily the chivalry of the Beaufort and Berkeley hunts, and is said to be the hardest riding secretary since Mr Horsman vindicated his nomenclature over the Irish pastures; Lord Fortescue, his father-in-law, and Colonel Foster, the Duke of Abercorn’s Master of the Horse.

“ In Lord Cloncurry’s carriage are Mr Fortescue Tynte, known to his own circle generally as ‘Forty,’ some say because he crosses the country at that rate of miles per hour; the Hon. E. Lawless, whom I would strongly recommend no man on a doubtful hunter to follow unless he wishes to be sat upon by the coroner; Capt. R. Mansfield; Mr. Percy La Touche, the subject of many a *quæsitum*; the Marquess of Drogheda, the ‘Prince of Punchestown’; Mr R. Moore, and his son Mr St. Leger Moore, as good over the country as in a polo rally; Mr T. Conolly, M.P., who has not lost the dash and *élan* which led him to join Lee’s broken ranks in the southern army; Baron de Robeck, ex-Master, and still as keen as cayenne; the Hon. C. and R. Bourke, both heavily but well mounted, and last but not least, the Master, well planted in his saddle, riding a plain but most workmanlike hunter.

“ Here we are at Arthurstown on a gently swelling eminence, grass all around us like the prairies, in front of four or five acres of luxurious gorse

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through which the bitches are feathering gracefully, while a preluding note or two, gradually swelling into a jubilant chorus tell us to harden our hearts, tighten our girths, and make ready for a start. There goes a little grey rover this time, probably a vixen, right in front of us and over a deep vale of grass half drained by three or four brooklets. It is a fair start, for the field has hitherto waited patiently on the top of the hill, and won't wait another second. Some diverge to the left to escape the deep going, following some crafty pilot; others have now as they always have, no beacon save hounds. One of the men I spoke of in a grey shooting coat has got a good hundred yards start. Mr P. La Touche is racing after him, the hounds half a field to the left. Ten severe minutes more and they are all streaming upwards towards a knoll crowned by a small grove and well lined. This is Kilteel, a famous fox haunt. Our fox tries it, but it is no haven now, though it has smoothed her draggled fur and cleaned her dainty pads. On to Johnstown Kennedy fast as you can clap your hands, but a cur dog turns her *en route* leftwards, and once more we go over a portion of the water-poached vale. The banks are fair, but the ditches are wide; hunters are dropping hind legs and saddles are emptying fast. To the right, wheel. There is Bishopscourt gorse again, but a kind hand has opened the earth, and our fox is safe. Well, for 'a fair forty minutes we've run and we've raced.' *Que voulez vous de plus? Jam satis.* A good motto."

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An admirable feature of Sir Edward's Mastership was the annual dinner he gave to the earthstoppers of the Hunt. I find the report of one of these convivial meetings at the end of his first season held at the Town Hall, Naas, where a very numerous company assembled to eat the dinner provided by Mr McEvoy of the Globe. Sir Edward himself presided, and many well-known members of the Hunt were there to support him, Mr Percy La Touche, Mr R. Mansfield, Mr J. G. Mansfield, Mr W. Kennedy, Mr Robert Kennedy, Mr R. Moore and others, besides representatives of the farmers of Kildare like Mr Patrick Carey, Mr R. Fisher, and Mr Matthew Conran. There was a band from the Kildare Rifles, which provided much appropriate music, from " God Save the Queen " to the " Fox-hunter's Jig."

The evening appears to have been a great success. The Chairman pointed out that fox-hunting in Kildare was not merely a selfish sport conducted for the amusement of a particular class, but besides providing diversion for all classes in a sporting community like theirs, it was of real benefit to the country. As illustrating this proposition he pointed to the fact that if ever a place of any sort was vacant in the Kildare country it was always immediately taken by a sportsman and a foxhunter, whose wants were provided by his neighbours in one calling or

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another to the great advantage of them all. In proposing the health of the farmers of Kildare, coupled with the names of Mr Carey, Mr Conran and Mr Fisher, he acknowledged the good feelings which existed between the farmers and the Hunt, and what the Hunt owed to them. As he truly said, a man might provide himself with hounds, horses, and hunt servants on the lordliest scale, but they would all be useless without the good will of the farmers. He had never met a farmer in the whole wide country hunted by the pack who objected to his riding over his land, and he felt indebted to them as his best and staunchest friends. I find the toast of the earthstoppers identified with the names of Jemmy Ivers of the Athy country, Flood of Rathcoffey, and John Nowlan of the Hollywood country. These good but humble sportsmen were unable to reply to the toast, but I gather from some further remarks of the Master that their services were properly appreciated, and a remark of his that the by-earths in the past season had cost £230 to look after and that he hoped in future that they might all be done away with as not only useless but mischievous, and that he trusted he should have the assistance of the earthwarners and earthstoppers in that desirable object, was received with great and approving cheers.

Sir Edward, " the Sir " as he was called by the

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country people, used to delight in telling a story of one of the few ladies who hunted in those days, and was kicked off, leaving her habit on the crutches, her horse galloping off. "I kept my head," he used to say, "got off my horse, took off my coat, walked backwards, and handed it to her."

With a view to putting on record so far as is possible the actual personnel of the Kildare Hunt, I have set out at different periods such lists of members as have been forthcoming. In continuing this practice, I do not think I can do better than give at length a list of the Kildare Hunt Club at the time when Sir Edward Kennedy filled the Mastership.

The Marquess of Drogheda.	Lord O. Fitzgerald, M.P.
Mr J. P. Tynte.	The Earl of Mayo.
Mr Wm Forbes.	Mr E. Kane.
Baron de Robeck.	The Marquess of Downshire.
The Earl of Clonmell.	
Mr E. Cole.	Sir James Higginson.
Mr Chas. Hoffman.	Mr David Mahony.
Mr R. Moore.	Mr Wm Robertson.
Mr C. Cramer Roberts.	Mr Goodriche Sheddon.
Sir Gerald G. Aylmer, Bart.	Mr F. Henry.
	Mr A. M. O'Ferrall.
Rev. H. Borrowes.	Mr T. Cooke Trench.
Lord Cloncurry.	Capt. Tuthill.
Lord Strathnairn.	Capt. Paget Butler.
Major Barton.	Mr James Lambert.

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Mr J. Adair.	Mr J. Maunsell.
Mr J. Archbold.	Mr A. M'Neill.
Sir E. Borrowes, Bart.	Mr J. Medlicott.
Mr H. Bruen, M.P.	Mr W. Meredyth.
Mr H. Carroll.	The Earl of Milltown.
Mr J. Carroll.	Mr C. Mills.
Mr. J. Cassidy.	Mr W. Moore.
Mr W. H. Cogan, M.P.	Mr P. Nolan.
Mr R. Crosby.	Col. O. Hanlon.
Mr J. Cox.	Mr W. Owen.
Mr W. Cotton.	Mr C. C. Palmer.
Captain Davis.	Capt. Rainsfort.
Mr E. Fitzgerald.	Mr Standish Roche.
Lieut.-Col. Forster.	Mr J. M. Royse.
Mr A. Graydon.	Mr H. O. Rose.
Major Gresson.	Mr C. Rynd.
Mr R. Hartley.	Mr J. P. Saunders.
Mr D. O'Connor	Lord Seaton.
Henchy.	Mr E. S. Smythe.
Mr Hugh Henry.	Capt. Graydon Smith.
Mr T. Hendrick.	Mr P. Sweetman.
Mr E. Hornidge.	Mr E. Sweetman.
Captain Humphry.	Mr W. Swifte.
General Irwin.	Mr Jas Tuite.
Mr R. Kennedy.	Viscount Valentia.
Mr W. Kennedy.	Mr M. Walsh.
Mr A. Kirkpatrick.	Mr J. Wakefield.
Mr G. P. L. Mansfield.	Major Warren.
Mr A. G. Mansfield.	Mr Jas Whitelaw.
Mr G. Mansfield.	Mr J. F. Wills.
Mr E. Mansfield.	Mr C. C. Vesey.

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Sir James Power, Bart.	Mr W. Lewis.
Mr B. F. Barton.	Mr J. Lynch.
Captain R. Renard.	Mr R. W. Manders.
Mr F. De Burgh.	Mr J. F. Meekings.
Mr T. De Burgh.	Mr F. E. J. McDonnell
Mr T. Franks.	The Earl of Carysfoot.
Mr M. Gannon.	Mr Fitzmaurice Pratt.
Mr G. R. Gresson.	Mr Horace Rochfort.
Mr J. S. Hamilton.	Viscount St Lawrence.
The Earl of Howth.	Mr T. N. Wade.
Mr W. F. Hume Dick,	Mr R. Walsh.
M.P.	Captain Warburton.

The poetical contribution to this chapter must be:

“ Conversation between two carmen, one a stranger in the country, who are ‘ afther lavin some gintlemen at the mate of the Kildare Dogs.’ ” The hounds are at fault close by where the cars are standing.

Were y’iver before in the County Kildare?
If ye were not bedad it’s meself will declare
Such a dishtrict it is as ye hardly can think
For huntin’ and courtin’ and lashins of drink.
There goes Sir Edward the bould little masther,
He sticks to his saddle as if he were plaster;
He’s fond of his hounds and he’s fond of his sport,
I wish we could find a few more of his sort.
Who’s that little man with short coat and pot hat,
Eyes wide open and riding a thing like a rat?
Tis the Sir’s brother Bob and like blazes he rides

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Wid two spurs and one whip in the ould pony's
sides.

And there is the other who rides like a man;
When he's well away 'tis catch Willy who can;
Again on his fav'rite he'll never be seen
For I'm tould he's broke down his good servant
Cruiskeen.

And who's that gint there in a mighty quandary?
That's Mr. Mansfield the hunt secretary;
That baste he's bestridin' does fall at odd time
But bedad it's not fair to tell sacrets in rhyme.
Who's that gentleman, he's a cute lookin feller
Wid a curly brimmed hat and coat tails like a
swaller?

O that's t'other Mansfield, the bould Masther Dick,
He'd kape you on laughin' until you were sick
Wid pains in yer jaws and yer sides cracked as well
Wid the quare things he'd say and the busthers
he'd tell.

And whose are those beards in the midst of the
scurry?

The man on the brown is the Lord of Cloncurry
The other's his brother the hon'rabl Ned,
Whose eyes wid excitement start out of his head.
He goes like a rocket from out of a gun
He sticks to his plan and rides well through a run.
Augh boys, who comes now, he's a regular swell
Wid his iligant clothes, 'tis the Earl of Clonmell
And sated beside him we see Colonel Foster
Belave me me toight feller sure he's no gosther.
Tare and ages says I but there goes a big man

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Upon a big horse fit to draw a big van.
Shure that's Charley Hoffman and don't he look
sly?

See the nod of his head and the wink of his eye.
There's Musther Mahony who comes from Grange
Con

That's a swate lookin' bit that he's sated upon.
And here's Captain Tuthill who comes from Black-
hall

Shure, he'll come down heavy if he gets a fall.
Holy Riddy who's this with a fine head of hair?
It's Captain McCalmont, I knew he'd be there,
An officer bould in the Royal Hussars
A suitable place for a great son of Mars.
Ther's Mr Kirkpatrick and Mr Tom Trinch
Each lookin' as grave as a judge on the binch;
And that's Mr Forbes who from Scotland has come
In Ireland on horses he's spint a large sum,
Good luck to his racers they run straight and true;
Long life to their owner more power to Falk Blue.
And there's Mrs Langrishe in her pony carriage
And lookin' more plazed than a bride at her mar-
riage;

Behold Mrs Tynte on a darlint brown mare
Whariver the hounds mate she's shure to be there.
And that is her husband, he's of the ould stock
Through life he has been a true sport lovin' cock;
His welcome is hearty and good is his cheer
He'd like to see hounds ivery day in the year.
There's Johnnie Hamilton, all full of fun
He ne'er leaves a heeltap nor lives through a run.

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

He's prepared for a deal and ready for chaff
He loikes a good joke and enjoys a good laugh.
There's a grand one to ride who as iveryone knows
Is troubled with neither the shakes nor the slows
Wid judgment that's true and a firm huntin' sate
The Baron de Robeck's a hard man to bate;
Here comes another who on ridin' is bint
I hardly need tell you 'tis Fortescue Tynte;
And look at old Frolic she shines like a bottle
Each vein standin' out on her skin like a wattle.
See Percy La Touche now racing behind him
A harder man show me if ever ye find him.
And who's that young feller upon a grey horse?
What blather ye're talkin, ye know him of course.
He's one of those Brooks as a liquor shop kape
And always protists a good article's chape.
And that's Mr Power who a few years ago
Knocked sparks from the wall of the Dublin Horse
Show.

'There's two Mr Moores the one a cheese rather
He's in the ninth Lancers, the other's his father.
Who's that welter weight? 'tis Mr Charles Bourke,*
He's sharper by far than the prong of a fork;
He must be a bad un and given to sin
For divil a prison he hasn't been in.
And that's Mr Wakefield, a hardy ould chap
Wid black butcher boots and a black velvet cap
Hard ridin' Sir James, though he bustles his cob
Will ne'er be mistook for a galloping snob.

* Inspector General of Prisons in Ireland.

SIR EDWARD KENNEDY, 1868-1874

There's Mr Frid Hinry as owns all Lodge Park
He loikes a good run, but prefers a good lark;
And ridin' a chestnut as round as a barrel
There's a fine growed young man Mr Ambrose
O'Farrell.

Past him on Oakstick Charlie Warburton whirls
Excellent at ridin' and courtin' the girls.
But where is the Markis, the lord from Moore
Abbey

I haven't a notion no more than a babby.
He hasn't been seen at the mates for some while;
Oh, 'twas he had the cattle and kep up the style.
And there's Traviater* that writes every week
Line afther line mixed with Latin and Greek;
Talks more of palaver nor sport I've heard said
But divil a matter so long as he's paid.

* Mr O'Connor Morris, "Triviata" of the *Field* newspaper.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION, 1874-1913

IF I have brought my undertaking to a close with the Mastership of Sir Edward Kennedy, it is not that material is wanting for a story of good sport with the Kildare hounds up to the present day, but because I judged that a history of the Hunt traced back to its origin ends naturally and properly with the records of those Masters who have passed away with their generations, and that the doings of my own contemporaries in Kildare are the proper theme for some future annalist of the Hunt.

It is certain that such an historian will have no difficulty in taking up the story where I leave it, though he will deal with new and constantly changing conditions, and will have to tell of many anxieties of Masters of hounds in later times which never troubled their predecessors. The finance of a modern Hunt with more than a hundred fox coverts requiring constant attention is a different

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affair from that which Masters like Sir John Kennedy and Mr La Touche were able and willing to undertake on a subscription of a few hundreds a year. The perennial difficulty of satisfying the claims on poultry funds by an imaginative people like the Irish does not diminish as time goes on as is shown by a letter received by a Master not long ago from a Roman Catholic clergyman. He enclosed a postal order for ten shillings at the request of a parishioner, a woman whose conscience pricked her because she had claimed and received that sum from the hunt for fowls destroyed by foxes, when, as a fact, she had never had any fowls to lose. Our future historian will have to take account of difficulties for modern Masters arising from the constantly increasing fields of inexperienced riders, and of the growing menace of wire fencing; but he will be able to tell of these and other difficulties successfully overcome and to begin his record with a story of an increasing prosperity enjoyed by the Kildare Hunt during nearly forty years.

His first pages will be concerned with the successful Mastership of Major Edward Mansfield, who took up the management left vacant by Sir Edward Kennedy in 1874 and showed excellent sport for three seasons until Mr William Forbes took the hounds on his retirement and continued as worthily the Kildare tradition of good sport until 1884.

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

Another of those long Masterships from which the Hunt has benefited at frequent periods in its history followed when Major R. St Leger Moore took the hounds in May of that year; and for thirteen seasons Kildare fields enjoyed sport under a Kildare man, which, notwithstanding the troublous times over which it extended, will bear comparison with that of any epoch in our annals. I find the close of this long and prosperous Mastership in 1887 marked by the presentation to the Master by the Ladies of Kildare of a massive piece of plate which bears the name of the ninety donors and a couple of happily expressed verses composed by one of them:

The ladies who love and who follow the chase,
From Dublin to Enfield, from Newbridge to
Naas,
Have joined in this tribute to sport in Kildare
Wishing joy to our Master and luck to his heir.

May the horn of our hunt as successive years run
Be borne by the sire and then by the son;
May Richard the Second in chivalry nursed
Be as courteous a Master as Richard the First.

While regretting the end of Major St Leger Moore's Mastership, Kildare men welcomed the reappearance as Master of a member of a family long famous in Kildare sport when Colonel H., now

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Baron, de Robeck, succeeded Major Moore in 1897, and showed typical Kildare sport for nine seasons. Time flies, and to some of the older followers of the hounds Baron de Robeck's relinquishment of the cares of the Mastership seems but of yesterday. And yet our future annalist must still take account of the Mastership of Mr A. F. Pollock, who most ably and adequately hunted the hounds for five seasons, till he was succeeded in 1911 by our present popular Master, Captain Talbot Ponsonby, the representative of a family whose name takes our recollection back to the earliest days of our history, and whom all Kildare sportsmen wish a long and prosperous continuance of the Mastership he has so happily begun.

With my task at length at an end it remains only for me to echo that wish and to thank very heartily those numerous friends whose kind assistance in gathering together the memories of sport in the county has alone enabled me to bring it to a conclusion.

THE MEN OF KILDARE

When autumn to gold turns the leaves on the trees
And the Swallows depart for their flight o'er the
 seas,
While the river goes swollen the ocean to meet
With a whisper as soft as a lullaby sweet,

HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

We look to our scarlets, our nags, and our cords
For a run with the Meaths or a day with the Wards;
Both are good in their way, but they cannot surpass
A brush with the foxhounds across the short grass.

Chorus.

Bravest of men are the men of Kildare,
Though fortune prove fickle they never de-
spair;
Would you still wear your laurels I'd have you
beware
How you ride to our hounds when you come to
Kildare.

Arthurstown's tried, he's at home, a sure find,
Gone away, they are off in the teeth of the wind.
There goes Willie Blacker of sweet Castlemartin,
You'll find the right place he has ever his heart in;
Beside him Will Kennedy, ex-Master of Hounds,
Who would ride a flat race and give most of 'em
pounds;
There too goes his brother, a jolly good fellow;
And Mansfield late master, whose heart is still
mellow.
Bravest of men, etc.

In grand style the double is cleared by bold Lawless
Cloncurry; close up to the front rank they call us,
While Beasley looks calm as if winning a plate,
And O'Ferrall is ever despising a gate,

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And the lord of Clonmell who enjoys all the fun
While Morris flies past though recording the run;
Colonel Forster, who oft brought the Tartan in
front,

And Forbes, all good sportsmen, are seen in the
front.

Bravest of men, etc.

See La Touche and De Robeck each obstacle clear,
While Sir Higginson's grey jumps as clear as a deer,
By Downshire they race on the Punchestown
course,

The fox heads away then for Elverstown gorse.
Here Wakefield the field often led a swift pace;
Kilbee and his daughters are still in the chase,
Reynard changes his course but he dodges in vain,
He never will shelter in covert again.

Bravest of men, etc.

Charley Warburton, known as the great welter
weight,

Never looks for a gap or unclasps a filled gate,
While Tynte the kind owner and lord of Tynte Park
Seems as careless and gay as if out for a lark.

Say who is the rider of yonder coal black
Who looks as if moulded upon the steed's back?

As true as I live, I could stake my life on't,
'Tis his Highness himself the young Duke of Con-
naught.

Bravest of men, etc.

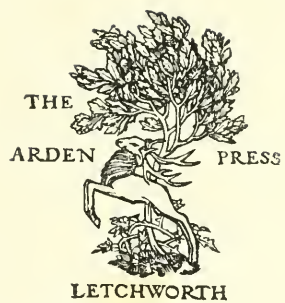
HISTORY OF THE KILDARE HUNT

Diana herself might look on with surprise
At the feats of the ladies who strive for the prize;
Why Reynard's been known to be caught by a blush
And gallantly die in presenting his brush;
But Reynard being Irish what less could he do
With lovely Churchill and fair Beaumann in view?
Other counties may boast, and with pride, of their
 pearls,
But none can compare with our own darling girls.

Fairest of maids are the maids of Kildare
When their cheeks have been flushed with
 their own native air,
If you'd keep yourself heart whole I'd have you
 beware
How you meet the soft glances they give in Kildare.

B. M. FITZPATRICK. 1876.

THE END.



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